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ROCOCO

AND TWO OTHERS

ROCOCO: VOTE BY BALLOT: FAREWELL TO THE THEATRE

BY GRANVILLE BARKER

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ROCOCO

1912

ROCOCO

Do you know how ugly the drawing-room of an English vicarage can be? Yes, I am aware of all that there should be about it; the old-world grace and charm of Jane-Austenism. One should sit upon Chippendale and glimpse the grey Norman church-tower through the casement. But what of the pious foundations of a more industrial age, churches built in mid-nineteenth century and rather scamped in the building, dedicated to the Glory of God and the soul's health of some sweating and sweated urban district? The Bishop w o u l d have a vicarage added, grumbled the church-donor. Well, then, consider his comfort a little, but to the glory of the Vicar nothing need be done. And nothing was. The architect (this an added labour of but little love to him) would give an ecclesiastical touch to the front porch, a pointed top to the front door, add some stained glass to the staircase window. But a mean house, a stuffy house, and the Vicar must indeed have fresh air in his soul if mean and stuffy doctrine was not to be generated there. The drawing-room would be the best room, and not a

bad room in its way, if it weren't that its proportions were vile, as though it felt it wanted to be larger than it was, and if the window and the fireplace and the door didn't seem to be quarrelling as to which should be the most conspicuous. The fireplace wins.

This particular one in this particular drawing-room is of yellow wood, stained and grained. It reaches not quite to the ceiling. It has a West Front air, if looking-glass may stand for windows; it is fretted, moreover, here and there, with little trefoil holes. It bears a full assault of the Vicar's wife's ideas of how to make the place "look nice." There is the clock, of course, which won't keep time; there are the vases which won't hold water; framed photographs, as many as can be crowded on the shelves; in every other crevice, knickknacks. Then, if you stand, as the Vicar often stands, at this point of vantage you are conscious of the wall-paper of amber and blue with a frieze above it measuring off yard by yard a sort of desert scene; a mountain, a lake, three palm-trees, two camels; and again; and again; until by the corner a camel and a palm-tree are cut out. On the walls there are pictures, of course. Two of them convey to you in a vague and water-coloury sort of way that an English countryside is pretty. There is "Christ among the Doctors," with a presentation brass plate on its frame; there is "Simply to Thy Cross I Cling." And there is an illuminated

testimonial to the Vicar, a mark of affection and esteem from the flock he ministered to as senior curate.

The furniture is either very heavy, stuffed, sprung, and tapestry-covered, or very light. There are quite a number of small tables (occasional-tables they are called), which should have four legs but have only three. There are several chairs, too, on which it would be unwise to sit down.

In the centre of the room, beneath the hanging, pink-shaded, electric chandelier, is a mahogany monument, a large round table of the "pedestal" variety, and on it tower to a climax the vicarage symbols of gentility and culture. In the centre of this table, beneath a glass shade, an elaborate reproduction of some sixteenth-century Pietà (a little High Church, it is thought; but Art, for some reason, runs that way). It stands on a Chinese silk mat, sent home by some exiled uncle. It is symmetrically surrounded by gift-books, a photograph album, a tray of painted Indian figures (very jolly! another gift from the exiled uncle), and a whale's tooth. The whole affair is draped with a red embroidered cloth.

The window of the room, with so many sorts of curtains and blinds to it that one would think the Vicar hatched conspiracies here by night, admits but a blurring light, which the carpet (Brussels) reflects, toned to an ugly yellow.

You really would not expect such a thing to be happen-

ing in such a place, but this carpet is at the moment the base of an apparently mortal struggle. The Vicar is undermost; his baldish head, when he tries to raise it, falls back and bumps. Kneeling on him, throttling his collar, is a hefty young man conscientiously out of temper, with scarlet face glowing against carroty hair. His name is Reginald and he is (one regrets to add) the Vicar's nephew, though it be only by marriage. The Vicar's wife, fragile and fifty, is making pathetic attempts to pull him off.

"*Have you had enough?*" *asks Reginald and grips the Vicar hard.*

"*Oh, Reginald . . . be good,*" *is all the Vicar's wife's appeal.*

Not two yards off a minor battle rages. Mrs. Reginald, coming up to reinforce, was intercepted by Miss Underwood, the Vicar's sister, on the same errand. The elder lady now has the younger pinned by the elbows and she emphasizes this very handsome control of the situation by teeth-rattling shakes.

"*Cat . . . cat . . . cat!*" *gasps Mrs. Reginald, who is plump and flaxen and easily disarranged.*

Miss Underwood only shakes her again. "*I'll teach you manners, Miss.*"

"*Oh, Reginald . . . do drop him,*" *moans poor Mrs. Underwood. For this is really very bad for the Vicar.*

"*Stick a pin into him, Mary,*" *advises her sister-in-law. Whereat Mrs. Reginald yelps in her iron grasp.*

" Don't you dare . . . it's poisonous," and then, " Oh . . . if you weren't an old woman I'd have boxed your ears."

Three violent shakes. " Would you? Would you? Would you? "

" I haven't got a pin, Carinthia," says Mrs. Underwood. She has conscientiously searched.

" Pull his hair, then," commands Carinthia.

At intervals, like a signal gun, Reginald repeats his query: " Have you had enough? " And the Vicar, though it is evident that he has, still, with some unsurrendering school-days' echo answering in his mind, will only gasp, " Most undignified . . . clergyman of the Church of England . . . your host, sir . . . ashamed of you . . . let me up at once."

Mrs. Underwood has failed at the hair; she flaps her hands in despair. " It's too short, Carinthia," she moans.

Mrs. Reginald begins to sob pitifully. It is very painful to be tightly held by the elbows from behind. So Miss Underwood, with the neatest of twists and pushes, lodges her in a chair, and thus released herself, folds her arms and surveys the situation. " Box my ears, would you? " is her postscript.

MRS. REGINALD. Well . . . you boxed father's.

MISS UNDERWOOD. Where is your wretched father-in-law?

Her hawklike eye surveys the room for this unknown in vain.

REGINALD. (*The proper interval having apparently elapsed.*) Have you had enough ?

Dignified he cannot look, thus outstretched. The Vicar, therefore, assumes a mixed expression of saintliness and obstinacy, his next best resource. His poor wife moans again. . . .

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, p l e a s e, Reginald . . . the floor's so hard for him !

REGINALD. (*A little anxious to have done with it himself.*) Have you had enough ?

THE VICAR. (*Quite supine.*) Do you consider this conduct becoming a gentleman ?

MRS. UNDERWOOD. And . . . Simon ! . . . if the servants have heard . . . they must have heard ! . . . what will they think ?

No, even this heart-breaking appeal falls flat.

REGINALD. Say you've had enough and I'll let you up.

THE VICAR. (*Reduced to casuistry.*) It's not at all the sort of thing I ought to say.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*So helpless.*) Oh . . . I think you might say it, Simon, just for once.

MISS UNDERWOOD. (*Grim with the pride of her own victory.*) Say nothing of the sort, Simon !

The Vicar has a burst of exasperation ; for after all he is on the floor and being knelt on.

THE VICAR. Confound it all, then, Carinthia, why don't you d o something ?

Carinthia casts a tactical eye over Reginald. The Vicar adds in parenthesis . . . a human touch ! . . .

THE VICAR. Don't kneel there, you young fool, you'll break my watch !

MISS UNDERWOOD. Wait till I get my breath.

But this prospect raises in Mrs. Underwood a perfect dithyramb of despair.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, p l e a s e, Carinthia. . . . No . . . don't start a g a i n. Such a scandal ! I wonder everything's not broken. (*So coaxingly to Reginald.*) Shall I say it for him ?

MRS. REGINALD. (*Fat little bantam, as she smooths her feathers in the armchair.*) You make him say it, Reggie.

But now the servants are on poor Mrs. Underwood's brain. Almost down to her knees she goes.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. They'll be coming up to see what the noise is. Oh . . . Simon !

It does strike the Vicar that this would occasion considerable scandal in the parish. There are so few good excuses for being found lying on the carpet, your nephew kneeling threateningly on the top of you. So he makes up his mind to it and enunciates with musical charm ; it might be a benediction. . . .

THE VICAR. I have had enough.

REGINALD. (*In some relief.*) That's all right.

He rises from the prostrate church militant ; he even helps it rise. This pleasant family party then look at each other, and, truth to tell, they are all a little ashamed.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Walking round the re-erected pillar of righteousness.*) Oh, how dusty you are!

MISS UNDERWOOD. Yes! (*The normal self uprising.*) Room's not been swept this morning.

The Vicar, dusted, feels that a reign of moral law can now be resumed. He draws himself up to fully five foot six.

THE VICAR. Now, sir, you will please apologize.

REGINALD. (*Looking very muscular.*) I shall not.

The Vicar drops the subject. Mrs. Reginald mutters and crows from the armchair.

MRS. REGINALD. Ha . . . who began it? Black and blue I am! Miss Underwood can apologize . . . your precious sister can apologize.

MISS UNDERWOOD. (*Crushing if inconsequent.*) You're running to fat, Gladys. Where's my embroidery?

MRS. UNDERWOOD. I put it safe, Carinthia. (*She discloses it and then begins to pat and smooth the dishevelled room.*) Among relations too! One expects to quarrel sometimes . . . it can't be helped. But not fighting! Oh, I never did . . . I feel so ashamed!

MISS UNDERWOOD. (*Britannia-like.*) Nonsense, Mary.

MRS. REGINALD. Nobody touched you, Aunt Mary.

THE VICAR. (*After his eyes have wandered vaguely round.*) Where's your father, Reginald?

REGINALD. (*Quite uninterested. He is straightening his own tie and collar.*) I don't know.

In the little silence that follows there comes a voice from under the mahogany monument. It is a voice at once dignified and pained, and the property of Reginald's father, whose name is Mortimer Uglow. And it says . . .

THE VOICE. I am here.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Who may be forgiven nerves.*) Oh, how uncanny!

REGINALD. (*Still at his tie.*) Well, you can come out, father, it's quite safe.

THE VOICE. (*Most unexpectedly.*) I shall not. (*And then more unexpectedly still.*) You can all leave the room.

THE VICAR. (*Who is generally resentful.*) Leave the room! Whose room is it, mine or yours? Come out, Mortimer, and don't be a fool.

But there is only silence. Why will not Mr. Uglow come out? Must he be ratted for? Then Mrs. Underwood sees why. She points to an object on the floor.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Simon!

THE VICAR. What is it?

Again, and this time as if to indicate some mystery, Mrs. Underwood points. The Vicar picks up the object, some disjection of the fight he thinks, and waves it mildly.

THE VICAR. Well, where does it go? I wonder everything in the room's not been upset!

MRS. UNDERWOOD. No, Simon, it's not a mat, it's his . . .

She concludes with an undeniable gesture, even

a smile. The Vicar, sniffing a little, hands over the trophy.

REGINALD. (*As he views it.*) Oh, of course.

MRS. REGINALD. Reggie, am I tidy at the back?

He tidies her at the back; a meticulous matter of hooks and eyes and, oh, his fingers are so big. Mrs. Underwood has taken a little hand-painted mirror from the mantelpiece, and this and the thing in question she places just without the screen of the falling tablecloth much as a devotee might place an offering at a shrine. But in Miss Underwood dwells no respect for persons.

MISS UNDERWOOD. Now, sir, for Heaven's sake put on your wig and come out.

There emerges a hand that trembles with wrath; it retrieves the offerings; there follow bumpings into the tablecloth as of a head and elbows.

THE VICAR. I must go and brush myself.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Simon, d'you think you could tell the maids that something fell over . . . they are such tattlers. It wouldn't be untrue. (*It wouldn't!*)

THE VICAR. I should scorn to do so, Mary. If they ask me, I must make the best explanation I can.

The Vicar swims out. Mr. Mortimer Uglow, his wig assumed and hardly awry at all, emerges from beneath the table. He is a vindictive-looking little man.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. You're not hurt, Mortimer, are you?

Mr. Uglow's only wound is in the dignity. That he cures by taking the situation oratorically in hand.

MR. UGLOW. If we are to continue this family discussion and if Miss Underwood, whom it does not in the least concern, has not the decency to leave the room and if you, Mary, cannot request your sister-in-law to leave it, I must at least demand that she does not speak to m e again.

Whoever else might be impressed, Miss Underwood is not. She does not even glance up from her embroidery.

MISS UNDERWOOD. A good thing for you I hadn't my thimble on when I did it.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Carinthia, I don't think you should have boxed Mortimer's ears . . . you know him so slightly.

MISS UNDERWOOD. He called me a Futile Female. I considered it a suitable reply.

The echo of that epigram brings compensation to Mr. Uglow. He puffs his chest.

MR. UGLOW. Your wife rallied to me, Reginald. I am much obliged to her . . . which is more than can be said of you.

REGINALD. Well, you can't hit a woman.

MR. UGLOW. (*Bitingly.*) And she knows it.

MISS UNDERWOOD. Pf!

The sound conveys that she would tackle a regiment of men with her umbrella: and she would.

REGINALD. (*Apoplectic, but he has worked down to the waist.*) There's a hook gone.

MRS. REGINALD. I thought so ! Lace torn ?

REGINALD. It doesn't show much. But I tackled Uncle Simon the minute he touched Gladys . . . that got my blood up all right. Don't you worry. We won.

This callously sporting summary is too much for Mrs. Underwood : she dissolves !

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, that such a thing should ever have happened in our house ! . . . in my drawing-room ! ! . . . real blows ! ! ! . . .

MRS. REGINALD. Don't cry, Aunt Mary . . . it wasn't your fault.

The Vicar returns, his hair and his countenance smoother. He adds his patting consolations to his poor wife's comfort.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. And I was kicked on the shin.

MRS. REGINALD. Say you're sorry, Reggie.

THE VICAR. My dear Mary . . . don't cry.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Clasping her beloved's arm.*) Simon did it . . . Reggie was throttling him black . . . he couldn't help it.

THE VICAR. I suggest that we show a more or less Christian spirit in letting bygones be bygones and endeavour to resume the discussion at the point where it ceased to be an amicable one. (*His wife, her clasp on his coat, through her drying tears has found more trouble.*) Yes, there is a slight rent . . . never mind.

The family party now settles itself into what

may have been more or less the situations from which they were roused to physical combat. Mr. Uglow secures a central place. There is silence a moment.

MR. UGLOW. My sister-in-law Jane had no right to bequeath the vase . . . it was not hers to bequeath.

That is the gage of battle. A legacy! What English family has not at some time shattered its mutual regard upon this siren rock? One notices now that these good people are all in deep mourning, on which the dust of combat shows up the more distinctly, as it should.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, Mortimer, think if you'd been able to come to the funeral and this had all happened then . . . it might have done!

MISS UNDERWOOD. But it didn't, Mary . . . control yourself.

MR. UGLOW. My brother George wrote to me on his death-bed . . . (*And then fiercely to the Vicar, as if this concerned his calling.*) . . . on his death-bed, sir. I have the letter here. . . .

THE VICAR. Yes, we've heard it.

REGINALD. And you sent them a copy.

Mr. Uglow's hand always seems to tremble; this time it is with excitement as he has pulled the letter from his pocket-book.

MR. UGLOW. Quiet, Reginald! Hear it again and pay attention. (*They settle to a strained boredom.*) "The Rococo Vase presented to me by the Emperor of Germany" . . . Now there he's wrong. (*The sound of his own reading has uplifted*

him: he condescends to them.) They're German Emperors, not Emperors of Germany. But George was an inaccurate fellow. Reggie has the same trick . . . it's in the family. I haven't it.

He is returning to the letter. But the Vicar interposes, lamblike, ominous though.

THE VICAR. I have not suggested on Mary's behalf . . . I wish you would remember, Mortimer, that the position I take up in this matter I take up purely on my wife's behalf. What have I to gain?

REGINALD. (*Clodhopping.*) Well, you're her husband, aren't you? She'll leave things to you. And she's older than you are.

THE VICAR. Reginald, you are most indelicate. (*And then, really thinking it is true . . .*) I have forborne to demand an apology from you. . . .

REGINALD. Because you wouldn't get it.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Genuinely and generously accommodating.*) Oh, I don't want the vase . . . I don't want anything!

THE VICAR. (*He is gradually mounting the pulpit.*) Don't think of the vase, Mary. Think of the principle involved.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. And you may die first, Simon. You're not strong, though you look it . . . all the colds you get . . , and nothing's ever the matter with me.

MR. UGLOW. (*Ignored . . . ignored!*) Mary, how much longer am I to wait to read this letter?

THE VICAR. (*Ominously, ironically lamblike now.*) Quite so. Your brother is waiting patiently . . .

and politely. Come, come; a Christian and a businesslike spirit!

Mr. Uglow's breath has been taken to resume the reading of the letter when on him . . . worse, on that tender top-knot of his . . . he finds Miss Underwood's hawklike eye. Its look passes through him, piercing Infinity as she says . . .

MISS UNDERWOOD. Why not a skull-cap . . . a sanitary skull-cap?

MR. UGLOW. (*With a minatory though fearful gasp.*) What's that?

THE VICAR. Nothing, Mortimer.

REGINALD. Some people look for trouble!

MISS UNDERWOOD. (*Addressing the Infinite still.*) And those that it fits can wear it.

THE VICAR. (*A little fearful himself. He is terrified of his sister, that's the truth; and well he may be.*) Let's have the letter, Mortimer.

MISS UNDERWOOD. Or at least a little gum . . . a little glue . . . a little stickphast for decency's sake.

She swings it to a beautiful rhythm. No, on the whole, Mr. Uglow will not join issue.

MR. UGLOW. I trust that my dignity requires no vindication. Never mind . . . I say nothing. (*And with a forgiving air he returns at last to the letter.*) "The Rococo Vase presented to me by the Emperor of Germany" . . . or German Emperor.

THE VICAR. Agreed. Don't cry, Mary. Well, here's a clean one. (*Benevolently he hands her a handkerchief.*)

MR. UGLOW. " On the occasion of my accompanying the mission."

MISS UNDERWOOD. Mission !

The word has touched a spot.

THE VICAR. Not a r e a l mission, Carinthia.

MR. UGLOW. A perfectly real mission. A mission from the Chamber of Commerce at . . . Don't go on as if the world were made up of low-church parsons and . . . and . . . their sisters !

As a convinced secularist behold him a perfect fighting cock.

REGINALD. (*Bored ; oh, so bored !*) Do get ahead, father.

MR. UGLOW. (*With a flourish.*) " Mission et cetera." Here we are. " My dear wife must have the enjoyment " . . . (*Again he condescends to them.*) Why he called her his dear wife I don't know. They hated each other like poison. But that was George all over . . . soft . . . never would face the truth. It's a family trait. You show signs of it, Mary.

THE VICAR. (*Soft and low.*) He was on his death-bed.

REGINALD. Get o n . . . father.

MR. UGLOW. " My wife " . . . She wasn't his dear wife. What's the good of pretending it ? . . . " must have the enjoyment of it while she lives. At her death I desire it to be an heirloom for the family." (*And he makes the last sentence tell, every word.*) There you are !

THE VICAR. (*Lamblike, ominous, ironic, persistent.*)

You sit looking at Mary. His sister and yours. Is she a member of the family or not ?

MR. UGLOW. (*Cocksure.*) Boys before girls . . . men before women. Don't argue that . . . it's the law. Titles and heirlooms . . . all the same thing.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Worm-womanlike, turning ever so little.*) Mortimer, it isn't as if we weren't giving you all the family things . . . the miniature and the bust of John Bright and grandmother's china and the big Shakespeare.

MR. UGLOW. Giving them, Mary, g i v i n g them ?

THE VICAR. Surrendering them willingly, Mortimer. They have ornamented our house for years.

MRS. REGINALD. It isn't as if you hadn't done pretty well out of Aunt Jane while she was alive !

THE VICAR. Oh, delicacy, Gladys ! And s o m e regard for the truth !

MRS. REGINALD. (*No nonsense about her.*) No, if we're talking business let's talk business. Her fifty pounds a year more than paid you for keeping her, didn't it ? Did it or didn't it ?

REGINALD. (*Gloomily.*) She never eat anything that I could see.

THE VICAR. She had a delicate appetite. It needed teasing . . . I mean coaxing. Oh, dear, this is most unpleasant !

REGINALD. Fifty pound a year is nearly a pound a week, you know.

THE VICAR. What about her clothes . . . what about her little holidays . . . what about the doctor . . . what about her temper to the last ? (*He*

summons the classics to clear this sordid air.) Oh . . . "De mortuis nil nisi bonum."

MRS. UNDERWOOD. She was a great trouble with her meals, Reginald.

MR. UGLOW. (*Letting rip.*) She was a horrible woman. I disliked her more than any woman I've ever met. She brought George to bankruptcy. When he was trying to arrange with his creditors and she came into the room, her face would sour them . . . I tell you, sour them.

MRS. REGINALD. (*She sums it up.*) Well, Uncle Simon's a clergyman and can put up with unpleasant people. It suited them well enough to have her. You had the room, Aunt Mary, you can't deny that. And anyway she's dead now . . . poor Aunt Jane! (*She throws this conventional verbal bone to Cerberus.*) And what with the things she has left you . . . ! What's to be done with her clothes?

Gladys and Mrs. Underwood suddenly face each other like two ladylike ghouls.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Well, you remember the mauve silk . . .

THE VICAR. Mary, pray allow me. (*Somehow his delicacy is shocked.*) The Poor.

MRS. REGINALD. (*In violent protest.*) Not the mauve silk! Nor her black lace shawl!

MISS UNDERWOOD. (*Shooting it out.*) They will make soup.

It makes Mr. Uglow jump, physically and mentally too.

MR. UGLOW. What!

MISS UNDERWOOD. The proceeds of their sale will make much needed soup . . . and blankets. (*Again her gaze transfixes that wig and she addresses Eternity.*) No brain under it ! . . . No wonder it's loose ! No brain.

Mr. Uglow just manages to ignore this.

REGINALD. Where is the beastly vase ? I don't know that I want to inherit it.

MR. UGLOW. Yes, may I ask for the second or third time to-day ? . . .

MISS UNDERWOOD. The third.

MR. UGLOW. (*He screws a baleful glance at her.*) May I ask for the second or third time . . .

REGINALD. It is the third time, father.

MR. UGLOW. (*His own son, too !*) Reginald, you have no tact. May I ask why the vase is not to be seen ?

MISS UNDERWOOD. (*Sharply.*) It's put away.

MRS. REGINALD. (*As sharp as she. Never any nonsense about Gladys.*) Why ?

MR. UGLOW. Gladys . . . ignore that, please. Mary ?

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Yes, Mortimer.

MR. UGLOW. It has been c h i p p e d.

THE VICAR. It has not been chipped.

MR. UGLOW. I f it has been chipped . . .

THE VICAR. I say it has not been chipped.

MR. UGLOW. If it h a d been chipped, sir . . . I should have held you responsible ! Produce it.

He is indeed very much of a man. A little more and he'll slap his chest. But the Vicar,

lamblike, etc. . . . we can now add dangerous. . . .

THE VICAR. Oh, no, we must not be ordered to produce it.

MR. UGLOW. (*Trumpet-toned.*) Produce it, Simon.

THE VICAR. Neither must we be shouted at.

MISS UNDERWOOD . . . or bawled at. Bald at ! Ha, ha !

And she taps her grey-haired parting with a thimbled finger to emphasize the pun. Mr. Uglow rises, too intent on his next impressive stroke even to notice it, or seem to.

MR. UGLOW. Simon, if you do not instantly produce the vase I shall refuse to treat this any longer in a friendly way. I shall place the matter in the hands of my solicitors.

This, in any family—is it not the final threat? Mrs. Underwood is genuinely shocked.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, Simon !

THE VICAR. As a matter of principle, Mary. . . .

REGINALD. (*Impartially.*) What rot !

MRS. UNDERWOOD. It was put away, I think, so that the sight of it might not rouse discussion . . . wasn't it, Simon ?

REGINALD. Well, we've had the discussion. Now get it out.

THE VICAR. (*Lamblike . . . etc.; add obstinate now.*) It is my principle not to submit to dictation. If I were asked politely to produce it. . . .

REGINALD. Ask him politely, father.

MR. UGLOW. (*Why shouldn't he have principles,*

too ?) I don't think I can. To ask politely might be an admission of some right of his to detain the property. This matter will go further. I shall commit myself in nothing without legal advice.

MRS. REGINALD. You get it out, Aunt Mary.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Almost thankful to be helpless in the matter.*) I can't. I don't know where it is.

MR. UGLOW. (*All the instinct for law in him blazing.*) You don't . . . ! This is important. He has no right to keep it from you, Mary. I venture to think. . . .

THE VICAR. Husband and wife are one, Mortimer.

MR. UGLOW. Not in law. Don't you cram your religion down my throat. Not in law any longer. We've improved all that. The Married Woman's Property Act ! I venture to think. . . .

Miss Underwood has disappeared. Her comment is to slam the door.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. I think perhaps Carinthia has gone for it, Mortimer.

MR. UGLOW. (*The case given him, he asks for costs, as it were.*) Then I object. . . . I object most strongly to this woman knowing the whereabouts of a vase which you, Mary . . .

THE VICAR. (*A little of the mere layman peeping now.*) Mortimer, do not refer to my sister as " this woman."

MR. UGLOW. Then treat my sister with the respect that is due to her, Simon.

They are face to face.

THE VICAR. I hope I do, Mortimer.

MR. UGLOW. And will you request Miss Underwood not to return to this room with or without the vase ?

THE VICAR. Why should I ?

MR. UGLOW. What has she to do with a family matter of mine ? I make no comment, Mary, upon the way you allow yourself to be ousted from authority in your own house. It is not my place to comment upon it, and I make none. I make no reference to the insults . . . the unwomanly insults that have been hurled at me by this Futile Female . . .

REGINALD. (*A remembered schoolmaster joke. He feels not unlike one as he watches his two elders squared to each other.*) "Apt alliteration's artful aid" . . . what ?

MR. UGLOW. Don't interrupt.

MRS. REGINALD. You're getting excited again, father.

MR. UGLOW. I am not.

MRS. REGINALD. Father !

There is one sure way to touch Mr. Uglow. She takes it. She points to his wig.

MR. UGLOW. What ? Well . . . where's a glass . . . where's a glass ?

He goes to the mantelpiece mirror. His sister follows him.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. We talked it over this morning, Mortimer, and we agreed that I am of a yielding disposition and I said I should feel much safer if I did not even know where it was while you were in the house.

MR. UGLOW. (*With very appropriate bitterness.*) And I your loving brother!

THE VICAR. (*Not to be outdone by Reginald in quotations.*) "A little more than kin and less than kind."

MR. UGLOW. (*His wig is straight.*) How dare you, Simon? A little more than ten minutes ago and I was struck . . . here in your house. How dare you quote poetry at me?

The Vicar feels he must pronounce on this.

THE VICAR. I regret that Carinthia has a masterful nature. She is apt to take the law into her own hands. And I fear there is something about you, Mortimer, that invites violence. I can usually tell when she is going to be unruly; there's a peculiar twitching of her hands. If you had not been aggravating us all with your so-called arguments, I should have noticed it in time and . . . taken steps.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. We're really very sorry, Mortimer. We can always . . . take steps. But . . . dear me! . . . I was never so surprised in my life. You all seemed to go mad at once. It makes me hot now to think of it.

The truth about Carinthia is that she is sometimes thought to be a little off her head. It's a form of genius.

THE VICAR. I shall have a headache to-morrow . . . my sermon day.

Mr. Uglow now begins to glow with a sense of coming victory. And he's not bad-natured, give him what he wants.

MR. UGLOW. Oh, no, you won't. More frightened than hurt! These things happen . . . the normal gross-feeding man sees red, you know, sees red. Reggie as a small boy . . . quite uncontrollable!

REGINALD. Well, I like that! You howled out for help.

THE VICAR. (*Lamblike and only lamblike.*) I am willing to obliterate the memory.

MRS. REGINALD. I'm sure I'm black and blue . . . and more torn than I can see.

MR. UGLOW. But what can you do when a woman forgets herself? I simply stepped aside . . . I happen to value my dignity.

The door opens. Miss Underwood with the vase. She deposits it on the mahogany table. It is two feet in height. It is lavishly blotched with gold and white and red. It has curves and crinkles. Its handles are bossy. My God, it is a vase!!!

MISS UNDERWOOD. There it is.

MR. UGLOW. (*With a victor's dignity.*) Thank you, Miss Underwood. (*He puts up gold-rimmed glasses.*) Ah . . . pure Rococo!

REGINALD. The Vi-Cocoa vase!

MR. UGLOW. That's not funny, Reginald.

REGINALD. Well . . . I think it is.

The trophy before him, Mr. Uglow mellows.

MR. UGLOW. Mary, you've often heard George tell us. The Emperor welcoming 'em . . . fine old fellow . . . speech in German . . . none of them

understood it. Then at the end . . . "Gentlemen, I raise my glass. Hock . . . hock . . . hock!"

REGINALD. (*Who knows a German accent when he hears it.*) A little more spit in it.

MR. UGLOW. Reginald, you're very vulgar.

REGINALD. Is that Potsdam?

The monstrosity has coloured views on it, one back, one front.

MR. UGLOW. Yes . . . home of Friedrich der Grosse! (*he calls it grocer*). A great nation. We can learn a lot from 'em!

This was before the war. What he says of them now is unprintable.

REGINALD. Yes. I suppose it's a jolly handsome piece of goods. Cost a lot.

MR. UGLOW. Royal factory . . . built to imitate Sèvres!

Apparently he would contemplate it for hours. But the Vicar, lamblike, etc. . . . Add insinuating now.

THE VICAR. Well, Mortimer, here is the vase. Now where are we?

MRS. REGINALD. (*Really protesting for the first time.*) Oh . . . are we going to begin all over again? Why don't you sell it and share up?

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Gladys, I don't think that would be quite nice.

MRS. REGINALD. I can't see why not.

MR. UGLOW. Sell an heirloom! . . . it can't be done.

REGINALD. Oh, yes, it can. You and I together

. . . cut off the entail . . . that's what it's called. It'd fetch twenty pounds at Christie's.

MR. UGLOW. (*The sight of it has exalted him beyond reason.*) More . . . more ! First-class rococo. I shouldn't dream of it.

Miss Underwood has resumed her embroidery. She pulls a determined needle as she says . . .

MISS UNDERWOOD. I think Mary would have a share in the proceeds, wouldn't she ?

MR. UGLOW. I think not.

THE VICAR. W h y not, Mortimer ?

MR. UGLOW. (*With fine detachment.*) Well, it's a point of law. I'm not quite sure . . . but let's consider it in equity. (*Not that he knows what on earth he means !*) If I died . . . and Reginald died childless and Mary survived us . . . and it came to her ? Then there would be our cousins the Bamfords as next inheritors. Could she by arrangement with them sell and . . . ?

MRS. UNDERWOOD. I shouldn't like to sell it. It would seem like a slight on George . . . because he went bankrupt perhaps. And Jane always had it in her bedroom.

MISS UNDERWOOD. (*Thimbling the determined needle through.*) Most unsuitable for a bedroom.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Anxious to please.*) Didn't you suggest, Simon, that I might undertake not to leave it out of the family ?

THE VICAR. (*Covering a weak spot.*) In private conversation with y o u, Mary. . . .

MR. UGLOW. (*Most high and mighty, oh most !*)

I don't accept the suggestion. I don't accept it at all.

THE VICAR. (*And now taking the legal line in his turn.*) Let me point out to you, Mortimer, that there is nothing to prevent Mary's selling the vase for her own exclusive benefit.

MR. UGLOW. (*His guard down.*) Simon!

THE VICAR. (*Satisfied to have touched him.*) Once again, I merely insist upon a point of principle.

MR. UGLOW. (*But now flourishing a verbal sword.*) And I insist . . . let everybody understand it . . . I insist that all thought of selling an heirloom is given up! Reginald . . . Gladys, you are letting me be exceedingly upset.

REGINALD. Well . . . shall I walk off with it? They couldn't stop me.

He lifts it up; and this simplest of solutions strikes them all stupent; except Miss Underwood, who glances under her bushy eyebrows.

MISS UNDERWOOD. You'll drop it if you're not careful.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, Reggie, you couldn't carry that to the station . . . everyone would stare at you.

THE VICAR. I hope you would not be guilty of such an unprincipled act.

MRS. REGINALD. I won't have it at home, Reg, so I tell you. One of the servants'd be sure to . . . ! (*She sighs desperately.*) Why not s e l l the thing?

MR. UGLOW. Gladys, be silent.

REGINALD. (*As he puts the vase down, a little nearer the edge of the table.*) It is a weight.

So they have argued high and argued low and also argued round about it; they have argued in a full circle. And now there is a deadly calm. Mr. Uglow breaks it; his voice trembles a little, as does his hand with its signet ring rattling on the table.

MR. UGLOW. Then we are just where we started half an hour ago . . . are we, Simon ?

THE VICAR. (*Lamblike in excelsis.*) Precisely, Mortimer.

MR. UGLOW. I'm sorry. I'm very sorry. (*He gazes at them with cool ferocity.*) Now let us all keep our tempers.

THE VICAR. I hope I shall have no occasion to lose mine.

MR. UGLOW. Nor I mine.

He seems not to move a muscle, but in some mysterious way his wig shifts: a sure sign.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, Mortimer, you're going to get excited.

MR. UGLOW. I think not, Mary. I t r u s t not.

REGINALD. (*Proffering real temptation.*) Father . . . come away and write a letter about it.

MR. UGLOW. (*As his wrath swells.*) I f I write a letter . . . if my s o l i c i t o r s have to write a letter . . . there are people here who will regret this day.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Trembling at the coming storm.*) Simon, I'd much sooner he took it . . . I'd much rather he took everything Jane left me.

MR. UGLOW. Jane did not leave it to you, Mary.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, Mortimer, she did try to leave it to me.

MR. UGLOW. (*Running up the scale of indignation.*) She may have tried . . . but she did not succeed . . . because she could not . . . because she had no right to do so. (*And reaching the summit.*) I am not in the least excited.

Suddenly Miss Underwood takes a shrewd hand in the game.

MISS UNDERWOOD. Have you been to your lawyer ?

MR. UGLOW. (*Swivelling round.*) What's that ?

MRS. REGINALD. Have you asked your lawyer ?

He has not.

MR. UGLOW. Gladys, I will not answer her. I refuse to answer the . . . the . . . the female. (*But he has funked the "futile."*)

MRS. REGINALD. (*Soothing him.*) All right, father.

MISS UNDERWOOD. He hasn't because he knows what his lawyer would say. Rot's what his lawyer would say !

MR. UGLOW. (*Calling on the gods to protect this woman from him.*) Heaven knows I wish to discuss this calmly !

REGINALD. Aunt Mary, might I smoke ?

MISS UNDERWOOD. Not in the drawing-room.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. No . . . not in the drawing-room, please, Reginald.

MR. UGLOW. You're not to go away, Reginald.

REGINALD. Oh, well . . . hurry up.

Mr. Uglow looks at the Vicar. The Vicar is actually smiling. Can this mean defeat for the house of Uglow? Never.

MR. UGLOW. Do I understand that on your wife's behalf you entirely refuse to own the validity of my brother George's letter . . . where is it? . . . I read you the passage written on his death-bed.

THE VICAR. (*Measured and comforted. Victory gleams for him now.*) Why did he not mention the vase in his will?

MR. UGLOW. There were a great many things he did not mention in his will.

THE VICAR. Was his widow aware of the letter?

MR. UGLOW. You know she was.

THE VICAR. Why did she not carry out what you think to have been her husband's intention?

MR. UGLOW. Because she was a beast of a woman.

Mr. Uglow is getting the worst of it; his temper is slipping.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Mortimer, what language about the newly dead!

THE VICAR. An heirloom in the family?

MR. UGLOW. Quite so.

THE VICAR. On what grounds do you maintain that George's intentions are not carried out when it is left to my wife?

And indeed Mr. Uglow is "against the ropes," so to speak.

MISS UNDERWOOD. The man hasn't a wig to stand on. . . . I mean a leg.

MR. UGLOW. (*Pale with fury, hoarse with it, even pathetic in it.*) Don't you speak to me . . . I request you not to speak to me.

Reginald and Gladys quite seriously think this is bad for him.

REGINALD. Look here, father, Aunt Mary will undertake not to let it go out of the family. Leave it at that.

MRS. REGINALD. We don't want the thing, father . . . the drawing-room's full already.

MR. UGLOW. (*The pathos in him growing; he might flood the best Brussels with tears at any moment.*) It's not the vase. It's no longer the vase. It's the principle.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, don't, Mortimer . . . don't be like Simon. That's why I mustn't give in. It'll make it much more difficult if you start thinking of it like that.

MISS UNDERWOOD. (*Pulling and pushing that embroidery needle more grimly than ever.*) It's a principle in our family not to be bullied.

MRS. REGINALD. (*In almost a vulgar tone, really.*) If she'd go and mind her own family's business!

The Vicar knows that he has his Uglows on the run. Suavely he presses the advantage.

THE VICAR. I am sorry to repeat myself, Mortimer, but the vase was left to Jane a b s o l u t e l y. It has been s p e c i f i c a l l y left to Mary. She is under no obligation to keep it in the family.

MR. UGLOW. (*Control breaking.*) You'll get it, will you . . . you and your precious female sister ?

THE VICAR. (*Quieter and quieter ; that superior quietude.*) Oh, this is so unpleasant.

MR. UGLOW. (*Control broken.*) Never ! Never ! ! . . . not if I beggar myself in law-suits.

MISS UNDERWOOD. (*A sudden and vicious jab.*) Who wants the hideous thing ?

MR. UGLOW. (*Broken, all of him . . . in sheer hysterics . . . tears starting from his eyes.*) Hideous ! You hear her ? They'd sell it for what it would fetch. My brother George's rococo vase ! An objet d'art et vertu . . . an heirloom . . . a family record of public service ! Have you no feelings, Mary ?

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Dissolved.*) Oh, I'm very unhappy.

Again are Mr. Uglow and the Vicar breast to breast.

THE VICAR. Don't make your sister cry, sir.

MR. UGLOW. Make y o u r sister hold her tongue, sir. She has no right in this discussion at all. Am I to be provoked and badgered by a Futile Female ?

The Vicar and Mr. Uglow are intent on each other, the others are intent on them. No one notices that Miss Underwood's embroidery is very decidedly laid down and that her fingers begin to twitch.

THE VICAR. How dare you suppose, Mortimer, that Mary and I would not respect the wishes of the dead ?

MR. UGLOW. It's nothing to do with you, either.

Miss Underwood has risen from her chair. This Gladys does notice.

MRS. REGINALD. I say . . . Uncle Simon.

THE VICAR. What is it ?

REGINALD. Look here, Uncle Simon, let Aunt Mary write a letter undertaking . . . there's no need for all this row. . . .

MRS. UNDERWOOD. I will ! I'll undertake anything !

THE VICAR. (*The Church on its militant dignity now.*) Keep calm, Mary. I am being much provoked, too. Keep calm.

MR. UGLOW. (*Stamping it out.*) He won't let her . . . he and his sister . . . he won't give way in anything. Why should I be reasonable ?

REGINALD. If she will undertake it, will you . . . ?

MRS. REGINALD. Oh, Aunt Mary, stop her !

In the precisest manner possible, judging her distance with care, aiming well and true, Miss Underwood has, for the second time to-day, soundly boxed Mr. Uglow's ear. He yells.

MR. UGLOW. I say . . . I'm hurt.

REGINALD. Look here now . . . not a g a i n !

THE VICAR. (*He gets flustered. No wonder.*) Carinthia ! I should have taken steps ! It is almost excusable.

MR. UGLOW. I'm seriously hurt.

MRS. REGINALD. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

MISS UNDERWOOD. Did you feel the thimble ?

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, Carinthia, this is dreadful !

MR. UGLOW. I wish to preserve my dignity.

He backs out of her reach that he may the better do so.

MISS UNDERWOOD. Your wig's crooked.

MRS. REGINALD. (*Rousing : though her well-pinched arms have lively recollections of half an hour ago.*) Don't you insult my father.

MISS UNDERWOOD. Shall I put it straight ? It'll be off again.

She advances, her eyes gleaming. To do . . . Heaven knows what !

MR. UGLOW. (*Still backing.*) Go away.

REGINALD. (*Who really doesn't fancy tackling the lady either.*) Why don't you keep her in hand ?

MR. UGLOW. (*Backed as far as he can, and in terror.*) Simon, you're a cad and your sister's a mad cad. Take her away.

But this the Vicar will not endure. He has been called a cad, and that no English gentleman will stand, and a clergyman is a gentleman, sir. In ringing tones and with his finest gesture you hear him. "Get out of my house!" Mr. Uglow doubtless could reply more fittingly were it not that Miss Underwood still approaches. He is feebly forcible merely. "Don't you order me about," he quavers. What is he but a fascinated rabbit before the terrible woman? The gentlemanly Vicar advances—"Get out before I

put you out," he vociferates—*Englishman to the backbone. But that is Reginald's waited-for excuse.* "*Oh, no, you don't,*" *he says and bears down on the Vicar. Mrs. Underwood yelps in soft but agonized apprehension:* "*Oh, Simon, be careful.*" *Mr. Uglow has his hands up, not indeed in token of surrender,—though surrender to the virago poised at him he would,—but to shield his precious wig.*

"*Mind my head, do,*" *he yells; he will have it that it is his head.* "*Come away from my father,*" *calls out Mrs. Reginald, stoutly clasping Miss Underwood from behind round that iron-corseted waist. Miss Underwood swivels round.* "*Don't you touch me, Miss,*" *she snaps. But Gladys has weight and the two are toppling groundward while Reginald, one hand on the Vicar, one grabbing at Miss Underwood, to protect his wife* ("*Stop it, do!*" *he shouts*), *is outbalanced. And the Vicar making still determinedly for Mr. Uglow, and Mr. Uglow, his wig securer, preparing to defy the Vicar, the mêlée is joined once more. Only Mrs. Underwood is so far safe.*

The fighters breathe hard and sway. They sway against the great mahogany table. The Rococo Vase totters; it falls; it is smashed to pieces. By a supreme effort the immediate authors of its destruction—linked together—contrive not to sit down among them. Mrs. Underwood is heard to breathe, "*Oh . . . thank goodness!*"

VOTE BY BALLOT

1914

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It is one of those days of spring in England when the English spring is behaving itself. The sun shines white through the open French window into Mrs. Torpenhouse's drawing-room and adds another pattern to the carpet, while little motes that must otherwise inhabit the room unseen seem happy in its beams. It is a pretty room, empty at the moment, for ten minutes ago Mrs. Torpenhouse, with a garden hat on, her hands looking enormous in rough gloves, a basket slung to her arm, went out through that open window. It is Mrs. Torpenhouse's own particular room and she lives her life in it. But it is called the drawing-room; just as Mr. Torpenhouse's particular room is called the study. Then there is the dining-room, of course, and there is Mrs. Torpenhouse's bedroom. It is Mr. Torpenhouse's bedroom, too, but it is called hers. Then there is his dressing-room. There is a spare room where you can put anybody, and another spare room where you can hardly put anybody. And there are places for the three servants (Oh, but they will n o t keep the windows open!) and there is a garden room, and a few

odd holes and corners. With that you have an upper middle class English house (be careful about the "upper") standing in the suburbs of a country town, run on (say) £500 a year. And Mr. Torpenhouse's salary, "all in," is £800, so there is a comfortable margin. Besides, there are the accumulated savings of thirty years, never touched, the interest on them accumulating too.

It is not quite a typical house, for the Torpenhouses are not exactly typical people and the house reflects them: in particular it reflects her. In the drawing-room, for instance, you will find furniture which could only have been chosen by someone who liked good furniture because it was good. There are no wonderful "pieces," they are not all of a period; but it seems that each chair and table must have been asked to join the others, first for its own sake and then because they would all get on well together. The curtains are such pretty curtains, and they look neither too new nor too old. The patterns on them and on the wall paper and the carpet are modest patterns. There are not too many ornaments about either,—some few things bought because she liked them, some kept for old association's sake. Vivid colour the room does lack. Possibly to Mrs. Torpenhouse life itself is an affair of delicate half-tones, of grey and blue and mauve, and white that is not too white. Well . . . everything is spotlessly, chastely clean and well polished where polish should be.

On this spring morning (and it is nearly noon) while she, with garden hat and gloves and basket is outdoors, the square-faced, saucer-eyed parlour-maid, stiff in a print frock, shows into this drawing-room Lord Silverwell. He is sixty and his country riding clothes are smart. They are his armour, for beneath a quite harmless pomposity one may discern a slightly apologetic soul. A man, one would say, who has been thrust willy-nilly into importance. Nor when we learn that he is a wealthy manufacturer, a self-made man, a petty prince of commerce, need we revise this judgment. Mostly such folk are left wondering, after the first few years, how on earth they did get rich. In their hearts they are sometimes a little ashamed of it.

But the parlour-maid, whose bugle eye does not discern the innermost of things, is impressed by the visitor, even a little confused.

THE MAID. Yes. M r s. Torpenhouse is at home, sir . . . (*Her little mouth left gaping, then closes on the bigger morsel.*) my lord.

LORD SILVERWELL. Then I'll wait for Mr. Torpenhouse. And tell Mrs. Torpenhouse that . . . (*but he swallows it altogether*) is here.

THE MAID. Yes, my lord.

The maid is going as Mrs. Torpenhouse arrives through the window. The maid then does go.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. I saw you ride up. Someone took your horse ? I was down in the meadow looking for mushrooms.

She removes the enormous glove to give him a pretty, hardly wrinkled hand. Though she is not a tiny woman, she is fragile, and there is about her both expectation and surprise, as if she felt that all the queer things the world did do were simply nothing to the queerer things it might.

LORD SILVERWELL. That's a new maid.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Yes.

LORD SILVERWELL. She knew there was a title now, but she didn't know what title . . . and I was too shy to tell her.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Lewis is at the Town Hall.

LORD SILVERWELL. So's Noel. I said I'd wait for them both here . . . if I may.

They sit down. She shows him a little, though a very little gentle deference.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Lord Silverwell sounds much nicer . . . but Lewis says the town was disappointed.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*Enthroned in the bigger chair, his voice takes on, I regret to say, a rather pompous tone.*) I thought that well over . . . and as soon as I could speak of my impending . . . elevation I took advice. Cuttleton ? D'you think that ought to have been the title ? I owe the place much . . . it sounds as democratic as a peerage can.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. But it's how much the town owes you, Lewis says, they were thinking of. I suppose they'd have liked to stand sort of godfather to you in return.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*It's odd : he can be pompous and shy at the same time.*) Wychway of Cuttleton, I should have liked. But to ennoble your own name . . . one has to have done something. My own estate . . . Noel was born there, even though I bought it . . . that's modest and yet dignified . . . I hope. (*He looks at her even a little appealingly.*)

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Lewis likes it. And have you been to the House of Lords yet ?

LORD SILVERWELL. Not for worlds ! Not for months . . . I . . . I . . . it'll have to be done, though.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. But they don't wear anything special there, do they ? Coronets and things ?

LORD SILVERWELL. Only on certain occasions.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Have you got yours yet ?

LORD SILVERWELL. I've ordered one. It's usual.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. What's it made of ?

LORD SILVERWELL. Silver gilt.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. (*Her eyes twinkling.*) Now mind it's kept clean.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*She has him at his ease.*) Once a week with the forks and spoons.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. I'm serious.

LORD SILVERWELL. When did Torpenhouse go to the Town Hall ?

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Lewis has been going and coming all day. (*She seems, naïvely, as she says it, to be liking the sound of her husband's name. It is one gentle way of loving him.*) He's very anxious.

LORD SILVERWELL. We're all anxious.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. He ate no lunch.

LORD SILVERWELL. Noel ate no lunch. I ate a fair lunch. But I'm very anxious . . . and whichever way it goes now . . . most annoyed.

Mrs. Torpenhouse shakes her head. She almost seems to imply that this isn't genuine annoyance, but what she says is :

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. I can't take any real interest in politics, so I just don't pretend.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*A certain well-known sort of vehemence growing on him.*) At the very best the majority will have been cut down . . . cut to nothing . . . cut to ribbons.

In the simplest way she tries to recall him . . . to himself.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. But why should you be nervous of the House of Lords when you've been a r e a l member of Parliament all these years ?

LORD SILVERWELL. (*Who conscientiously will not be recalled.*) My position over this election is a very awkward one. Did you read the papers this morning ?

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Lewis reads both the papers, at breakfast.

He begins to perambulate the room, stiffly, in his riding breeches, for greater emphasis.

LORD SILVERWELL. Of course they're sick about it . . . in spite of that one ballot box and our peculiar hopes on a recount. It's been a safe seat ever since 1886, the second time I held it for them. I promised them it was a safe seat when they offered

me the barony. And now if my own son's to lose it . . . ! What could be more awkward ?

" They " seems to be not the public generally, nor even the electors of Cuttleton, but some higher, more mysterious power.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Yes . . . I'm afraid I don't understand.

Short of someone who understands better than you do, the most consoling thing is to meet someone who doesn't understand at all. Lord Silverwell is quieted, and, pausing in his walk, contemplates her garden basket with a sad but not unfriendly eye.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. One ought to pick them first thing in the morning . . . but I can't get up so early as I could once.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*Moodily : perhaps he thinks of mushroom picking as a boy.*) We grow them in a cellar.

Mrs. Torpenhouse's face lights up.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. There's Lewis putting his stick in the umbrella stand.

But it is Noel Wychway who comes in. The Honourable Noel Wychway, in full etiquette he is, but only for the past three weeks, and he will always drop that silly snobbish-sounding prefix when he can. Noel is thirty or a little more. He is an example of what the good things of life, lavishly given, from good food to good education, can do

for any man. They can do much and he shows it. They cannot do more, and he, before all people, knows it. He greets Mrs. Torpenhouse punctiliously, and then, amusedly grim, faces his father, who at sight of him goes grimly glum.

NOEL. How d'y do, Mrs. Torpenhouse ?

LORD SILVERWELL. Well, Noel ?

NOEL. One !

LORD SILVERWELL. A g a i n s t you ?

NOEL. Yes.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*With some solemnity.*) I'm damned ! Mrs. Torpenhouse will excuse me.

NOEL. It's not your fault, father . . . and I' m damned.

Mr. Torpenhouse comes in. Lord Silverwell pounces on him.

LORD SILVERWELL. Lewis, can we petition ? One can always prove bribery, if one wants to.

NOEL. No . . . let it be.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*Protestant: pathetic.*) But it leaves me in such an i m p o s s i b l y awkward position.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Will you have some tea ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Yes, Mary.

LORD SILVERWELL. Thank you.

NOEL. (*As he sits and stretches: a man who knows the worst.*) By one vote, mind you ! Two hundred and twenty-five in that extra box . . . We were fifteen to the good last night, not fourteen . . . I wish the fool had never found it. One vote ! !

LORD SILVERWELL. (*With a sudden snap.*) I wish I knew whose vote.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. And have you really not got in for good and all?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*Who has hovered near the door.*) I'll tell . . . what is her name?

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Kate.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. . . . to bring tea. I must wash . . . that committee room table . . .

He disappears. A man past sixty; not handsome, not even distinguished. But there is something in his face, a touch of enthusiasm, which would mark him out from common men. There is a touch of music in his voice, a falling cadence which lets you know that sometimes his thoughts are on far-off things. One understands how a woman would marry him. At this moment the woman who did marry him says . . .

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Lewis is very upset.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*With sudden violence.*) Braxted let us down. Have you seen his letter?

NOEL. No . . . confound his letter.

LORD SILVERWELL. Lewis has it. (*Then he gets up again, to resume his perambulating vehemence.*) That shows you the personal attention one ought to pay to a small constituency. I did thirty years ago. I spent a solid three years tackling every man in the place. Then I got careless . . . but that shouldn't have made you careless. No, it's not

your fault . . . I daresay Lewis remembers . . . he should have put you in the way of it.

NOEL. Dash it . . . I've had three weeks . . . not much more.

LORD SILVERWELL. One vote! I suspect Braxted. If Braxted had voted straight . . . and you'd been elected by the Mayor . . . that would have been bad enough . . . a casting vote!

NOEL. Well . . . Braxted came down for the re-count . . . and he told me . . . not that he need have told me . . . that out of personal regard for you . . . no kindness to me at all . . . he deliberately spoiled his voting paper . . . so there.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*With one sweeping gesture rejecting Braxted.*) I don't believe him. He went against you. You read his letter?

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. (*In her soft voice.*) Lewis thinks Mr. Braxted is far too violent to mean anything he says.

Then comes a paternal-filial scrap. Quite good-natured; the usual happy family thing.

LORD SILVERWELL. I never liked your Address.

NOEL. You didn't expect me to copy your Address.

LORD SILVERWELL. My Address got me in last January.

NOEL. You got in last January because you'd always got in.

LORD SILVERWELL. I'm not blaming you.

The maid arrives with tea.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Here's tea . . . we shall all feel better then.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*Forgivingly.*) Your meetings were excellent . . . Lewis assures me.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. And you never went to one of them ?

LORD SILVERWELL. A Peer of the Realm, you see . . . (*He has to take breath after it*) may take no part in an election.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Not even to help his own son ! That isn't natural, is it ?

She begins to administer tea ; a priestess of consolation. Torpenhouse comes back. But he is still troubled and the trouble seems deep in him. He takes a chair apart.

LORD SILVERWELL. Lord Mount-Torby may have been too radical for them.

NOEL. Nobody else was radical enough.

LORD SILVERWELL. He speaks well. Got that letter of Braxted's, Lewis ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I tore it up . . . I didn't know you wanted it.

LORD SILVERWELL. There may have been a dozen other men who did as he said he'd do. . . .

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Spoilt his paper on purpose . . . he told us. . . .

NOEL. (*Excusably irritable in defeat under his careless mask.*) When he knew we'd lost !

LORD SILVERWELL. If he says so, I daresay he did. With all his faults he's a feeling fellow.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. (*Thankful to hear a soft word.*) Oh, y e s.

LORD SILVERWELL. If a dozen voted Tory because you weren't Radical enough for 'em . . . silly fools ! . . . and hadn't the honesty to tell you so as Braxted told you, still a hundred men calling themselves Tories must have gone for you because you're . . . because you were . . .

NOEL. Your son !

LORD SILVERWELL. (*With a vicious snap : he is rapidly evolving some real feelings about this affair.*) Well . . . not a smooth-headed carpet-bagger of a Conservative penny-a-lining barrister, whatever else you are ! I'm sorry to seem upset, dear Mrs. Torpenhouse. . . .

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Give Lord Silverwell his tea, Lewis.

LORD SILVERWELL. . . . But my position with the Party Whips is . . . I do assure you . . . a most impossibly awkward one. (*And now we can place the mysterious "They."*)

NOEL. It's no use, father . . . yes, sugar, please . . . we thought we knew the town and every man's politics in it. Well . . . we didn't. I shan't stand again.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. (*As she ministers tea to poor Noel.*) Don't say that.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*With a sudden serious rectitude.*) Lewis, I hope all the men at the works voted straight. I don't mean those whose opinions we know. There are Tories and Socialists . . . and

I've never attempted to penalize a man for his political opinions. But all those that aren't anything in particular. If I didn't think they voted like one man for you, Noel, I . . . I should be very deeply hurt.

NOEL. You'd have won the seat yourself, Torpenhouse.

Torpenhouse gives him a quite scared look.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. No.

NOEL. Well, you've been a first-rate chairman of Committee, and I'm sorry I've let you all down.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*As he stirs his tea.*) If Noel won't stand again I really think you'd better, Lewis.

NOEL. (*In settled relief.*) I won't.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*With that same almost scared look.*) I couldn't.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Oh, Lewis !

LORD SILVERWELL. Yes . . . why not ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I couldn't . . . afford it.

LORD SILVERWELL. Now I know what you can afford and what you can't.

NOEL. (*Encouragingly.*) You stand.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. There are reasons why I couldn't.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Lewis, I think it'd be nice for you to stand . . . if only one felt sure you wouldn't be elected.

The charming inconsequence of this lets Torpenhouse relax to saying genially:

MR. TORPENHOUSE. My dear Mary, don't talk nonsense.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. (*She smiles gravely at him.*) That may sound silly . . . but it isn't.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*With some decision.*) Lewis, our factory has made Cuttleton what it is, and my estate is the biggest in the County . . . no credit to me, of course, but that's so. If I can't any longer sit for the place and Noel really means now to go and work up the South American branch . . .

NOEL. For a couple of years.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*Truly a patron and a peer.*) . . . who else should have the seat but you? You're my man of business . . . you're more than that by a long way. Confound it all, if it had been your money instead of mine in the beginning you'd be Lord Something or other now, and I should be . . . ! ! And I strongly suspect Cuttleton knows it too.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. (*As she glows with gentle pride.*) Lewis, when you're asked like that I'm sure you ought to, just to show people that it's true . . . some of it . . . of course, only some. But if it comes to being elected and spending all your time in that draughty, stuffy House of Commons we came to see you in, Sir Alfred . . . there, how one does slip back ! . . . well, his health wouldn't stand that. And then of course I should have to interfere.

Torpenhouse bows his head and his voice seems to come from rather far away.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I'm too old. I wish I weren't.

LORD SILVERWELL. We must get the seat back.

NOEL. Don't be depressed about my losing it, Torpenhouse.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I wish I could begin my life over again. I'm very unhappy . . . I . . . I . . .

With no more warning he bursts into tears and sits there crying like a child. The rest of them are really alarmed.

LORD SILVERWELL. My dear Lewis !

NOEL. My dear Torpenhouse . . . for heaven's sake ! It hasn't been your fault.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Oh, Lewis, I knew the strain'd be too much for you. He's had nothing to eat to-day.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. It's not the strain. I'm all right. Let me alone.

He extricates himself from their petting ; moves to a chair farther apart still ; turns away, his shoulders heaving. Lord Silverwell is puzzled and tactful.

LORD SILVERWELL. Elections . . . very wearing things. We'll talk of something else. Give me some more tea, my dear lady.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. He's not strong.

Suddenly Torpenhouse turns back. There are unashamed tears on his cheeks ; one quite ridiculously smears his nose. But his face is vivid and his eyes and his voice are very steady indeed.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Wychway !

NOEL. Yes.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. No, no . . . your father . . . Lord Silverwell . . . I want to call you by your old name. . . .

LORD SILVERWELL. (*Encouragingly, as a nurse to a child.*) So you shall.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I have been a pillar of Liberalism in this town for thirty years . . . haven't I ?

LORD SILVERWELL. All honour to you.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Be sure your sin will find you out.

His voice rings aloud. But then his knees seem to give way and he sits of a heap gaping at them. Lord Silverwell gapes in return. Noel is puzzled. Mrs. Torpenhouse soothes him . . . what she says is no matter . . . in her soft way.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. My dear, you're very excited.

NOEL. (*Trying ironic humour as a tonic.*) Well, it has at last . . . but only by one vote.

Emotion seizes Torpenhouse again, but this time rebellious, incoherent.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. To-day ? Ah ! . . . but until to-day . . . the day of triumph ! Oh, it's very difficult ! This is my hour ! !

LORD SILVERWELL. My dear old chap, you're not well.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Oh, Lewis . . . do sit down.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Mary, I shall confess all . . . with pride . . . oh, with such pride. Noel . . . you have some right to complain.

NOEL. Not at all . . . take it easy . . . better by yourself. See you to-morrow.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. No; I mayn't have the courage. Noel . . . you're a good fellow. In a sense it never mattered with your father . . . and even now he won't understand. Boys together!

He is standing, waving his arms at them. He looks very queer indeed.

LORD SILVERWELL. Of course we were!

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. (*Going to him, her tears starting now.*) Oh, . . . Lewis!

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Don't hold me! Don't cry, Mary. It was my vote.

There is a silence: and the two other men look at what he has said (in a sense) as they might at some queer object that had marvellously dropped through the ceiling.

NOEL. What d'you mean?

LORD SILVERWELL. My dear Lewis . . . what do you mean?

Torpenhouse is attacking them now. He shakes his fist.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I needn't have done it. Couldn't I have spoiled my paper? The Mayor would have voted you in. No, no!

LORD SILVERWELL. Do you mean you voted the wrong way by mistake yesterday?

NOEL. (*His eyebrows askew.*) I don't think that's what you mean, is it?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*Erect, heroic.*) As a Tory I have never fully approved of the secrecy of the ballot. . . .

LORD SILVERWELL. (*With a wild effort to capture the situation.*) Lewis, if you're ill let your wife send for the doctor. If you're not, let's understand what it is you're trying to say . . . and stop talking nonsense.

But Torpenhouse only looks at him now in the kindest way and shakes his head.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Wychway, we have been good friends. I have served you faithfully . . . I don't regret that. Noel, I am quite calm now and I think it my duty, as chairman of your Committee, to inform you that yesterday I deliberately voted against you.

LORD SILVERWELL. You're not serious.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. My vote was serious.

NOEL. (*Grimly.*) It was.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*To the listening earth; and the political heavens as well.*) But w h y ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. For conscience' sake.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*With a certain direct dignity: after all, he is the man's chief.*) Lewis, explain yourself.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. It isn't easy.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Lewis, don't you think you'd better go and lie down ?

LORD SILVERWELL. (*Tartly.*) No, I don't think he had.

Torpenhouse now faces his friend and the situation very squarely.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Lord Silverwell. . . .

LORD SILVERWELL. Don't call me that. I mean,

don't say it in that tone. Hang it, man, you queered the election!

MR. TORPENHOUSE. You probably have never known what a moral difficulty was.

LORD SILVERWELL. Haven't I? Why haven't I, pray?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Well, you've been so successful. And look at the money you've made. . . .

LORD SILVERWELL. I have made it honestly.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. You see! I said so.

NOEL. (*Cutting in coolly; sharply a little, though.*) But what had I done to land you in such a queer dilemma?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*With perfect simplicity.*) Personally I am so sorry, Noel. . . .

NOEL. No, believe me, Torpenhouse, personally I'm not very much annoyed . . . though I could easily pretend to be. And politically I'm quite excited.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Thank you.

NOEL. You disapproved of my special little brand of opinion? Well, so did my father. He thought my Address horrid. It was lucky he'd lost his vote.

LORD SILVERWELL. Don't joke about this, Noel.

NOEL. But I think we'd better. (*For an air of extreme discomfort is gradually settling on them all.*) Come on, somebody must explain. You felt, for the party's sake, that you couldn't withdraw from the chairmanship . . . so you paid me out privately. I quite understand.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*Almost to himself it seems.*) Oh . . . but I'm punished!

LORD SILVERWELL. Punished! Noel's punished. Let me tell you, Torpenhouse, that you have behaved dishonourably.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. (*With proper decorum, if they are to disgrace themselves.*) Lewis . . . shall I go?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*Firmly.*) I have. But you don't know how . . . or begin to.

LORD SILVERWELL. Then we'll hear the worst, please.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*Glowering at him now.*) I am a Politician.

NOEL. So we find. No . . . I beg your pardon. (*Noel's nerves are really a little strained and irony is his only vent for them.*)

MR. TORPENHOUSE. A serious politician. For thirty years I have voted straight. That at least is a comfort.

LORD SILVERWELL. Do you mean to say that all these years you have been voting against m e?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Yes, of course.

LORD SILVERWELL. And been chairman of my Committee!

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Well, as chairman of your Committee . . . and your man of business . . . I always got you in. What are you grumbling at?

LORD SILVERWELL. This is unbelievable!

NOEL. No. Get it all clear, Torpenhouse . . . and you'll feel better.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Yesterday it was sheer force of habit, Noel, nothing else. I felt so sure you were safe . . . by a hundred or two at least. I never stopped to think. And now, at last, when I'd given up all hope of this damned constituency ever doing the right thing . . . to beat you . . . to have my better nature triumph in spite of itself! And by my own single vote! Mary, God has been very merciful to me.

Caught in this sudden whirlpool of feeling and thought, he almost breaks down again.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Oh, hush, Lewis, don't say things like that.

LORD SILVERWELL. Torpenhouse, this is very serious. I've always known there was a kink in you. You've had strange tastes . . . in books and things like that. But I never thought it was a moral kink.

NOEL. My dear father, this needs understanding. Don't lumber us up with injured feelings.

LORD SILVERWELL. Noel, please stop treating me as if I were a fool. If ever you have to look back on thirty years of a friend's deception . . .! I'm sorry; it's a harsh word, but I cannot take this lightly.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*Gently.*) My friend, I've never taken it lightly, if that's any satisfaction to you. You see, you haven't a conscience. . . .

LORD SILVERWELL. (*Exploding.*) I will n o t be talked to like this. No moral difficulties . . . lumbered up with feelings . . . no conscience!

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Yes, but I hadn't finished. A tormenting conscience, like mine.

LORD SILVERWELL. Can you wonder?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I have wondered all my life why Spirits should possess us.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*His eyes inclined to bolt; but he tries the heavily ironic, a leaf from Noel's book.*) Dare I say: Keep to the point? Dare I hint that perhaps you don't know either what you're talking about? With Noel looking at me? No!

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Why could I give my body and mind to working up the boot trade for you . . . and never my soul at all?

LORD SILVERWELL. I never asked for it. I've never given my soul to the boot trade.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. You have.

LORD SILVERWELL. I have not.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Why, whatever else has made it? My disinterested business ability! Is that the price of success the god of this world asks?

LORD SILVERWELL. We will not argue that.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Dear Lewis, what did you want to give your soul to?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Dear Mary, I've never discovered. That's why I'm a failure at sixty-three. (*Then to his old friend.*) I made you a Liberal. . . .

LORD SILVERWELL. You did not make me a Liberal. (*It is a relief to him to scrap.*)

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I did. It was wrong of me. But I did it deliberately. For it seemed the only thing you could be.

LORD SILVERWELL. I was always a Liberal. You mainly put me into Parliament. I've said so . . . and thanked you, more than once.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. You were a voter . . .

LORD SILVERWELL. Well, I voted Liberal.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. You voted a n y way. (*And then with sudden extraordinary fire.*) Don't interrupt me when for once in my life I'm saying something serious about m y s e l f.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*In cheerful amazement.*) Oh, go on ! I'm the culprit here, I suppose.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I was a Tory. That meant something to me. It was a faith . . . a creed !

LORD SILVERWELL. Then you could have stuck to it,

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I was very fond of you.

LORD SILVERWELL. I should have appreciated your independence of spirit.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Would you ? I wonder. You're such a healthy man, Wychway, and everything agrees with you. And you like people to agree with you. For Heaven has made you yourself as nearly all of a piece as possible. It takes perfect machinery to do that . . . with our boots, doesn't it ? But I'm a cobbled bit of goods. I've always known it. And that has made me an unhappy man all my life.

Mrs. Torpenhouse sits there, forgotten. At this her lip quivers.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Oh, Lewis !

Torpenhouse has not forgotten her. He turns

and says with real chivalry, though whimsy follows close. . . .

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I reverence my life with you, my dear . . . and thanks to the beauty that's in you . . . it has grown into being a good habit instead of a bad one. But it's a habit, Mary, now.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. (*Simply.*) Do you remember saying to me years ago when you'd had bronchitis . . . and before the nurse too . . . that there were things about you I must never want to understand?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*Quaintly.*) Yes . . . before the nurse!

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. And I went away and I cried and cried.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*Apostrophizing himself.*) Brute!

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. And then I thought: Well, it's only like having a husband and a visitor in one. And I haven't minded a bit; though I've never dared say so till now . . . when we're all old people . . . except Noel.

NOEL. (*Loving her; who could help it!*) Noel won't tell.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*Stoutly.*) I don't feel old. And sometimes I feel wicked. I'm tempted to go kissing pretty girls. And if it wasn't they'd dislike it . . . for I'm not much to look at . . . I'm not sure I hadn't better kiss one and have done with it.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. (*Ever so mischievously.*) You may try, if you'll tell me whether she lets you.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*Quite master of himself now,*

jovial actually.) Well . . . and what are you thinking of, old Wychway ?

LORD SILVERWELL. (*In the spirit of it.*) You are ! A Tory at heart . . . a true Tory, by Jove !

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Why, we're all wrapped in hypocrisies, fold on fold ! So shall I set up now as a libertine country squire ? I resign my place with you, of course, Wychway.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*Attacked thus in quite a new place.*) What ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Don't you want me to ?

LORD SILVERWELL. Must you ? I suppose you must. Dear me, this is very vexing.

NOEL. No, no !

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Thirty years' heartless deception !

LORD SILVERWELL. Well, I must be allowed to feel it.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. That isn't the reason. I want to resign.

LORD SILVERWELL. You w a n t to ! No, really, I think that is too bad. Just when I've taken the peerage and Noel's going away. Look here : what you have done is unforgivable. But, after all, politics are only politics, and now, by Jove, instead of asking me to forgive you, you make matters worse by resigning. We can't do without you, and you know it. Put your foot down, Mrs. Torpenhouse. Whatever else has happened . . . why cap it by trying to break up the whole system of things like this ? (*He finishes breathless, but justified.*)

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. (*With judgment.*) Lewis must stop working sometime.

LORD SILVERWELL. I think at least it was for me to object to your remaining.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*With meaning . . .*) But I know you won't . . . you see.

LORD SILVERWELL. (. . . *which is utterly missed.*) No, I am prepared to face a great deal for your sake. I am stupid enough to be very fond of you, Lewis. . . .

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Bless you.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*Piling it on, quite sincerely.*) I thought we had been something more than master and . . . agent. I thought we had been friends. If I have been mistaken. . . .

MR. TORPENHOUSE. You've not been mistaken.

NOEL. (*Who mistrusts these competing emotions.*) What is it you're prepared to face, father ?

LORD SILVERWELL. (*Assuming importance.*) Well, I have been thinking as well as one could in these trying circumstances. Must the whole town know of this ?

NOEL. (*Agape.*) Certainly not.

LORD SILVERWELL. Then ought we to tell each member of the Committee . . . in confidence ?

NOEL. That comes to the same thing, doesn't it ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*A little shamefaced now.*) I don't mind hanging on as chairman for a bit . . . say, till the next election's in sight.

LORD SILVERWELL. No, that seems to me a little immoral.

NOEL. What's worrying you, father ?

LORD SILVERWELL. For conscience' sake ought there not to be some sort of public announcement?

NOEL. (*With the utmost impatience.*) What on earth good will that do ?

LORD SILVERWELL. (*Parental ; fine-spirited.*) It will be very painful to m e . . . very galling. I may be made to appear almost ridiculous. But it is of Lewis I have been thinking. When in doubt, make a clean breast of things. It seems to me that this is a public matter. So somebody should be told. It may not so much matter who . . . and not the whole truth perhaps. . . .

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*Curtly.*) I shall tell nobody else.

LORD SILVERWELL. That might perhaps relieve m y mind, Lewis, but are you sure that on general principles you are not wrong ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Look here ! Is the ballot secret . . . or is it not ?

LORD SILVERWELL. That seems to me hardly a subject at the moment . . . either for joke or argument.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Wychway, you're so trying when you're pompous.

LORD SILVERWELL. I am not pompous.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I beg your pardon . . . I shouldn't have said it.

LORD SILVERWELL. Nonsense . . . you know you can say what you like to me . . . you always have. But you've no right to tell me I'm pompous.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Who wants to stand in a white sheet with his real and sham opinions hung round him ? Confound it . . . set me the example. Withdraw your poster that Wychway's boots are the best. Advertise what we really think of them.

LORD SILVERWELL. Wychway's boots a r e the best.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Then why don't you wear 'em ?

LORD SILVERWELL. If we must go into details . . . because one of my feet is larger than the other, and it would be absurdly extravagant to have a special pattern manufactured. Wychway's boots are the best that can be made in the circumstances for the price, and any sensible man reading the advertisement reads that into it.

NOEL. I've been wearing 'em at all our meetings . . . on the platform . . . and sticking 'em well out. But I don't like the shape.

LORD SILVERWELL. My dear Noel, we have twenty-four different shapes.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I've worn them for thirty years. And whenever the spring weather comes they hurt me . . . not at other times.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. I have tried my best to wear them . . . but you don't make a point of ladies' shoes, do you ?

LORD SILVERWELL. No. Women, my dear Mrs. Torpenhouse . . . who purchase our class of goods, seem to prefer to pay seven and six or ten and six for a thoroughly showy, shoddy article. We make

a few . . . to satisfy our retailers, but I have always given instructions for that line never to be . . . as we say . . . pressed. We are wandering hopelessly from the subject.

NOEL. There's one supreme happiness I could get out of this situation. Torpenhouse . . . stand at the next election on the other side . . . your right side. By Jove . . . if you will I'll come back and fight you and watch you beat me.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Noel . . . don't mock me.

NOEL. I'm serious.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. You're not sixty-three. You've not wasted your life.

LORD SILVERWELL. (*Sharply.*) In my service ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*As sharply . . . throwing it back.*) Yes.

LORD SILVERWELL. Torpenhouse, you'd better stop. Noel, we'd better go. You're beginning to say things you'll be sorry for.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Not till to-morrow . . . when you'll have forgotten them.

LORD SILVERWELL. Thank you. Of all the queer suggestions you have made this afternoon . . . that seems to me quite the queerest. I think I may say without exaggeration . . . I am doing my best not to be pompous . . . that this unhappy business will leave its mark on me.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. What sort of a mark ?

LORD SILVERWELL. Had we not better let things rest for the moment ? We are all very upset.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. But I want you to under-

stand a little, dear old friend, how the whole thing happened. All it ever meant to you and this sweating little town of yours to have a seat in Parliament and you sitting in it was as far from the statesmanship I'd kneel and pray for as the rag heap on which his poem will be printed is from the soul of the man who sings it. I've watched you in Parliament shout and chatter about this measure and that . . . yes, and I've shouted and chattered outside Parliament too . . . it has been so easy . . . taking our tune from those worthy people who are handed the country to govern and kindly give us something to chatter and shout for while they're so busy-bodily doing it. From one decade to another . . . the same old tune . . . different words to it. It really didn't seem to me that it could hurt England at all to have you in Parliament. Honestly, I don't think it ever has. . . .

LORD SILVERWELL. Thank you.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Oh, if having you and five or six hundred men like you talking there could hurt her . . . well, only by God's mercy could she be saved anyhow! And I owed so much to you, Wychway, in those old days . . . and I do now . . . that I felt I owed it to you first of all just to be silent when they asked you to stand. I dug a pit for myself then. I think if we'd waited a few years the other side might have asked you too.

LORD SILVERWELL. I should have refused.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Why? We could have kept you unattached. Of course I meant at first to keep

out of the vile business altogether. But that was no use. You wouldn't even try to get on without me. I wondered if I could make you a Tory. But that wouldn't do. You hadn't the stamina or the style. So I had to help you discover that you were a Liberal. Once I thought I'd declare right against you. . . . Perhaps it would have braced you up and made you take things seriously.

LORD SILVERWELL. Take things seriously !

MR. TORPENHOUSE. What I call seriously. But it was that ticklish Home Rule time. I'd have smashed you politically if I had. You were wobbling badly over it, you know, and it wouldn't bear wobbling over. So of course I couldn't. And my fraud grew and grew . . . and all my salvation when the day came was to fold up my little Tory vote so tight and drop it gently in. Well . . . Newman could find comfort telling beads at a miracle-working altar in Naples. It all seems unreal now . . . as I look back on it.

LORD SILVERWELL. Lewis, I wonder at you . . . you still show a most twisted sense of things . . . I must say it.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I h a v e a twisted sense of things. I told you so. I am the crooked man . . . whose life's a crooked mile . . . he earns a crooked sixpence . . . and climbs a crooked stile . . . into a straighter world for him, he always hopes.

LORD SILVERWELL. Have you ever done a thing for me . . . have I ever asked you to . . . which was not straight . . . as a die ? I wish to be told.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. In one word ?

LORD SILVERWELL. Yes or No.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. White or black . . . Liberal, Tory . . . True or false. If only God had made you such a world . . . and given it to you once for all . . . why, then perhaps that honest best you've always done would be enough to set it straight ! But under our clothes and in your boots we're queer God's creatures still.

LORD SILVERWELL. It all sounds to me mere rubbish, but if that's how you feel . . . why you couldn't abstain from voting, I can't think . . . that would have been bad enough.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I did one year. I simply couldn't stomach the other man that time.

LORD SILVERWELL. Then if you ever let it be a personal question, the least you could have done was to vote for me. No, Lewis, I take that very badly.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. That year I was tempted to vote for you. You were turning so nicely that year . . . but I knew you'd still go the wrong way at Westminster. So I didn't.

LORD SILVERWELL. Turning ?

NOEL. Tory.

LORD SILVERWELL. What on earth do you mean ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Oh, you've been turned for some years now. It quieted my conscience a little . . . when I grew sure you would. That's why they've made you a peer . . . and for other reasons. So that it shouldn't be noticed.

LORD SILVERWELL. Are you serious ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Of course.

LORD SILVERWELL. I have never been so insulted in all my life.

NOEL. My dear father !

LORD SILVERWELL. Torpenhouse . . . you will apologize.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I'm afraid I can't.

LORD SILVERWELL. Then we part.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I thought we'd better.

NOEL. That seems a pity, though, doesn't it, if you're really in political agreement for the very first time ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I doubt if we should find quite that. Mine is hardly the official Tory mind. Why should it be ? But he, of course. . . .

LORD SILVERWELL. Mrs. Torpenhouse . . . good-bye. As I prefer not to be discussed like this in my own presence, I will remove the temptation.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. We must part as good friends as possible.

LORD SILVERWELL. Whether, my dear fellow, it is worth while our doing anything but forget all the nonsense we've been talking, I . . . I . . . will consider to-morrow. You're an unaccountable chap, you know. You always were, confound you. Noel, if you've your car here I'll drive home.

NOEL. I'll walk. I want a walk.

LORD SILVERWELL. See you to-morrow, Lewis . . . see you to-morrow.

Lord Silverwell goes.

NOEL. I'll tuck him in warm. You ought to lie down, you're a bit shaken.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Just a bit.

NOEL. We must have you in Parliament. Stand . . . somewhere else . . . next January. It'd relieve your mind . . . and if you did get in they'd be the better for having you, Heaven knows.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. What, join that mob of vulgar demagogues who now prostitute the name of Tory to the nation! Thank you.

NOEL. Yes, after a meeting . . . after a glorious rally to our great Principles I used to feel something like that about my lot. That's really why I'm not standing again. But then I'm nothing particular. I'd be one of the mob . . . just as he was. You wouldn't be.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I shouldn't have been . . . perhaps.

NOEL. Good-bye, Mrs. Torpenhouse.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Good-bye.

Noel goes.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. My dear, I felt quite frightened for you. Are you better?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Better than I've been for years.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Oughtn't you to have done it?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Done what, Mary?

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Voted wrong.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I did not vote wrong.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Well . . . right.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. It was a matter for my own conscience. The ballot is secret.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. I never thought it was really secret. I thought that was just pretence . . . like the other things.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I am prepared to advocate the abolition of the ballot. It compromises dignity and independence. . . .

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. And that would have saved all this happening.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. It is, in itself, demoralizing.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. You know . . . I've got a vote.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Of course . . . for that property at Swindlands. Only for the Borough Council.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Oh, not a real one. And I've never used it, for it seemed so silly. Is there a ballot there ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Yes.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Then the next time I shall go over, it'll be such fun. D'you remember years ago when we promised to have no secrets ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I remember.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. You kept this from me.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. There are others, Mary.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. I don't mind. I daresay it has been good for you. I shan't tell you about my ballot . . . ever.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. (*Loving her.*) My dear.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Are you really going to leave Lord . . . Mr. Wychway ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. If he'll let me.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. He ought to. I wanted you to ten years ago.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. We've money enough.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Have we ? Could we do anything with it ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. Would you like to travel ?

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Yes, perhaps.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I've meant and meant to go to Spain . . . not for a week or two . . . for a year . . . to live there a bit.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Why Spain ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I thought of it when I had to learn Spanish for our South American business. What a waste, otherwise !

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. I don't think I should like Spain. But you go . . . why not ?

MR. TORPENHOUSE. What . . . after telling you I wanted to kiss pretty girls ?

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. They wouldn't look at you. Yes, it was rather vulgar of you to say that . . . and before Noel. Young men think you mean these things.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. It's not such a journey to Spain . . . and if I didn't like it I could come back. You could have Eleanor to stay with you. Wychway won't let me leave.

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. You could make him.

MR. TORPENHOUSE. I'm rather done up . . . I'll take a book to my room. . . .

MRS. TORPENHOUSE. Yes . . . sleep's what you need . . . I do think.

So Torpenhouse goes to his room to lie down. And he may take that journey to Spain. And in the years that are left him he may do lots of other things. Why not indeed?

FAREWELL TO THE THEATRE

1916

FAREWELL TO THE THEATRE

This talk took place in Edward's office. He is a London solicitor and his office reflects his standing. It is, that is to say, a musty dusty room in a house two hundred years old or so, now mercilessly chopped into offices. The woodwork is so old and cracked that new paint looks old on it and fresh paper on the walls looks dingy in a day. You may clean the windows (and it is sometimes done), but nothing will make them shine. The floor has been polished and stained and painted and scraped and painted again till it hardly looks like wood at all. And the furniture is old, not old enough to be interesting, old enough to be very respectable. There are some pictures on the wall. One is a good print of Lord Mansfield, one represents a naval battle, the third a nondescript piece of mountain scenery. How the battle and the nondescript came there nobody knows. One pictures some distracted client arriving with them under his arm. They were left to lean against the wall ten years or so; then a clerk hung them up. The newest thing in the room and quite the strangest-seeming there is a photograph on the mantelpiece of

Edward's daughter, and that has been here nine years or so, ever since she died. A pretty child.

Well, the papers renew themselves and the room is full of them, bundles and bundles and bundles. They spread about poor Edward like the leaves of a forest; they lie packed close like last year's leaves, and in time are buried deep like leaves of the year before last. His clerk knows what they all are and where everything is. He flicks a feather duster over them occasionally and has been observed to put some—very reluctantly—away. Very reluctantly. For, after all, these are the fabric of a first-class practice, and it is his instinct to have them in evidence. Edward has never thought about it. Thus was the room when his uncle walked out of it and he walked in, and thus he will leave it in a few years for some junior partner.

Note the signs then by which a lawyer marks himself above reproach. Beware the businesslike well-polished office, clicking with machinery. There works a man who does not practise law so much as make a practice of it. Beware!

Edward is at his desk. Wherever else is he, unless he rises wearily to stretch his long limbs before the fire? Thin, humorous, and rather more than middle-aged, a sensitive, distinguished face. One likes Edward. His clerk shows in Dorothy Taverner. Everybody knows Miss Dorothy Taverner. The clerk beams at her with forgetful joy—shamelessly at her while he tried to say to Edward "Miss Taverner, sir." Then he departs.

EDWARD. How punctual!

DOROTHY. Twelve ten by the clock out there. Your note said eleven thirty.

EDWARD. And I said: How punctual!

They shake hands like the oldest friends. He bends a little over her pretty hand.

DOROTHY. You have no right to send for me at all when I'm rehearsing . . . and you know it.

EDWARD. It was urgent. Sit down.

DOROTHY. My dear Edward, nothing is more urgent than that my rehearsals should go well . . . and if I leave the company to the mercy of my understudy and this author-boy . . . though he's a nice author-boy . . . they don't.

EDWARD. I'm sure they don't.

DOROTHY. His beating heart tells him that we must all be bad actors because we don't live and move just like the creatures as he began thinking them into being. He almost weeps. Then I tell him God called him into collaboration fifty-three flying years too late as far as I'm concerned.

EDWARD. Oh . . . oh!

DOROTHY. Fifty-four will have flown on November the next eighteenth. And that cheers us all up and we start again. Well, dear friend, you are fifty-seven and y o u . . . look it.

Having made point, pause for effect. Edward carefully places legal documents on one side.

EDWARD. My dear Dorothy . . .

DOROTHY. That tone means that a little business

talk has now begun. Where's the rickety paper-knife that I play with ? Thank you.

EDWARD. Vernon Dix and . . . Boothby, is that the name of your treasurer ? . . . paid me a formal visit yesterday afternoon.

DOROTHY. Behind my back ! What about ?

EDWARD. They complain you won't look at your balance-sheets. . . .

DOROTHY. (*With cheerful charm.*) But they're liars. I look at them every week.

EDWARD. . . . That you won't study them.

DOROTHY. I'm studying a new part.

EDWARD. They brought me a pretty full statement. I spent some hours over it.

DOROTHY. More money wanted ?

EDWARD. They also brought me the estimate for this new play.

DOROTHY. It'll be exceeded.

EDWARD. Can more money be found ?

DOROTHY. We can search.

EDWARD. You remember the last search.

DOROTHY. The rent's paid till Christmas.

EDWARD. Trust your landlord !

DOROTHY. This play may do well.

EDWARD. It may not.

Dorothy gives a sigh. With an impatient gesture or two she takes off her hat and puts it obliviously on Edward's inkstand. She runs her fingers through her front hair, takes out a hair-pin and viciously replaces it. Signs, these are, that she is worried.

DOROTHY. Yes, I remember the last search. Nearly kissed by old James Levison for Dear Art's sake. At my age! I wonder did he guess what an even choice it was between five thousand pounds and boxing his flat white ears.

EDWARD. There was Shelburne's five thousand and Mrs. Minto's. . . .

DOROTHY. Well, I did kiss Lord Shelburne . . . he's a dear. Blue-eyed and over seventy or under twenty . . . then I always want to kiss them. Why?

EDWARD. My eyes . . . alas . . . were never blue and never will be now.

DOROTHY. Because I suppose then they don't care whether I do or not. All that money gone? I'm sorry. Mrs. Minto can't afford it.

EDWARD. No, it's not all gone. And another five thousand will make you safe through this season. Another ten thousand unless you've very bad luck should carry you to Christmas . . . otherwise, if this new play isn't an instant success, you must close.

Dorothy sits upright in her chair.

DOROTHY. I have been in management for sixteen years. I have paid some dividends. "Dividends" is correct, I think.

EDWARD. I keep a sort of abstract which reminds me of the fearful and wonderful way you have been financed.

DOROTHY. Dear Edward, I should have cheated everybody but for you.

EDWARD. I have also managed mostly to stop

you from cheating yourself. Dorothy, it is odd that the people who put money in only to make some did often manage to make it out of you, while the people who stumped up for art's sake and yours never got anything at all.

DOROTHY. I don't see anything odd in that. They got what they wanted. People always do. Some of them got the art . . . and one of them nearly got me.

EDWARD. Why didn't you marry him, Dorothy? A good fellow . . . a good match.

DOROTHY. Oh, my dear! Marry him? Marry! Confound him . . . why did he ask me? Now I can't ever ask him for a penny again. Yes . . . on that bright Sunday morning the manageress was tempted I won't deny.

EDWARD. But the record of the past five years does not warrant your promising more dividends . . . and that's the truth.

DOROTHY. Well . . . shall we hide the balance-sheets away and shall I gird myself with boastfulness once more . . . once weary more? What is our record for Dear Art's Sake? Shakespeare . . . without scenery. Molière, Holberg, Ibsen, Strindberg, Maeterlinck, Shaw, Hauptmann, d'Annunzio, Benevente, Giacosa, Parraval, Ostrowsky, Lavallière, Tchekoff, Galsworthy, Masefield, Henniker, Borghese, Brieux, Yeats, van Arpent and Claudel. Some of it sounds quite old-fashioned already . . . and some has begun to pay. When a Knight of the Garter dies, you know, they

proclaim his title over his tomb. You'll have to come to my burning, Edward, and through a trumpet of rolled-up balance-sheets proclaim my titles to fame. "She, here deceased, did her duty by them, Shakespeare, Ibsen. . . ." How I hate boasting! And boasting to millionaires to get money out of them. I'm as vain as a peacock still . . . but boasting I hate.

EDWARD. Then consider. You can see through the production of this . . . what's it called?

DOROTHY. "The Salamander." Good title!

EDWARD. If it fails . . . shut up . . . finally.

DOROTHY. Yes . . . I've been thinking of doing that, Edward. "The Salamander" won't succeed in the fine full business sense . . . though now I'm whispered that for the first time it most perversely may.

EDWARD. Then what on earth are you putting it up for?

DOROTHY. Because it's good enough . . . and then the next can be better. It won't succeed because I've only a small part in it. Say Egoist . . . say Actress.

EDWARD. Wiser to keep out altogether.

DOROTHY. And then it wouldn't succeed because the dear Public would think I didn't believe in it enough. Queer silly children the dear Public are, aren't they? For ten years now my acting is held to have grown steadily worse, so quite rightly they won't rush to plays with me in them. But then they won't have my plays with

me out of them either. So what's a poor body to do?

EDWARD. I don't hold that your acting has grown steadily worse.

DOROTHY. Well . . . not steadily perhaps. But I never was steady, was I? And you don't like the parts I choose?

EDWARD. Not when you hide yourself behind them.

DOROTHY. I never do.

EDWARD. Your old self! But I want you to finish with it all, anyway.

DOROTHY. Why?

EDWARD. Because I fear I see heart-break ahead.

DOROTHY. That you need never look to see . . . for the best of reasons.

EDWARD. You still do care . . . far too much.

DOROTHY. Do I hanker for the old thrill . . . like wine bubbling in one's heart . . . and then the stir in the audience when . . . on I came. Dear friend, you now prefer my acting . . . off the stage. My well-known enthusiasm . . . it seems to me it rings more tinny every day . . . but I'm glad it takes you in. Still, even that's only an echo . . . growing fainter since I died.

EDWARD. My dear Dorothy.

DOROTHY. Oh . . . but you knew I was dead. You own now to mourning me. You know the day and hour I died. Hypocrite . . . I remember how you congratulated me on the tragic occasion . . . kissing my hand . . . you're the only man that

does it naturally. Doesn't that abstract remind you when we produced "The Flight of the Duchess"?

EDWARD. Many of us thought you very good.

DOROTHY. Because I was far, far better than many a bad actress would have been. It is the queerest sensation, Edward, to be dead . . . though after a while you get quite used to it. Are you still alive, by the way?

EDWARD. There is the same feeble flicker that there has ever been.

DOROTHY. Burn on, dear Edward, burn on . . . that I may warm my poor hands sometimes at the flame you are.

EDWARD. It can serve no better purpose.

DOROTHY. No . . . so I'm sure I think.

There falls a little silence. Then Edward speaks the more bitterly that it is without anger.

EDWARD. Damn them! I'd damn their souls, if they had any. They've helped themselves to you at so much a time for . . . how many years? Dorothy . . . what have they ever given you in return?

DOROTHY. Oh, if that were all my grievance I'd be a happy ghost this day. If I'd a thousand souls and they wanted them, the dear Public . . . as they n e e d them . . . God knows they do . . . they should have everyone, for me. What does the law say, Edward? Is a soul private property?

EDWARD. There are decisions against it.

DOROTHY. Then I prefer your law to your religion. It's more public-spirited.

EDWARD. My ancestral brand of religion, my dear, taught me to disapprove very strongly of the theatre.

DOROTHY. And after watching my career you've found out why. How long have you been in this office, Edward ?

EDWARD. Thirty years, nearly.

DOROTHY. The weight of them ! Do you remember having tea at Richmond . . . at The Roebuck at Richmond . . . when they'd offered you this billet and we talked wisely of the future ?

EDWARD. I do.

DOROTHY. And I made you take it, didn't I ?

EDWARD. You did.

DOROTHY. And I wouldn't marry you.

Edward looks at her. One side of his mouth twitches a little. You might charitably call it a smile. But his eyes are smiling.

DOROTHY. Don't say you didn't ask me to marry you.

EDWARD. On that occasion ?

DOROTHY. Yes . . . on that occasion, too. That's what one calls the Past, isn't it ? How right I was . . . and what successes we've both been !

EDWARD. My son Charles tells me that I have done very well. Do you know, I was moved to ask him the other night as we sat in the box whether he wasn't in love with you ?

DOROTHY. Do you think it's hereditary ?

EDWARD. He said he had been as a boy.

DOROTHY. How old is he ?

EDWARD. Twenty-three.

DOROTHY. Bless him! If young things love you, be quite sure that you're alive. I do regret sometimes.

EDWARD. What did happen . . . so suddenly?

DOROTHY. What happens to the summer? You go walking one day and you feel that it has gone.

EDWARD. You've been that to the Theatre.

DOROTHY. A summer day . . . a long, long summer day. Thank you. I prefer the sonnet which calls me a breath of spring. But truly he died . . . oh, that lion's head of his! . . . before I was full blown.

EDWARD. I know it by heart.

DOROTHY. It's a good sonnet.

EDWARD. It makes history of you.

DOROTHY. And it never made me vain a bit because indeed I knew it was true. Yes, I like to be standard literature.

EDWARD. Easy enough for a poet to be public-spirited over you.

DOROTHY. But from the time I was born, Edward, I believe I knew my destiny. And I've never quarrelled with it . . . never. I can't imagine how people get along if they don't know by sheer instinct what they're meant to be and do. What muddles they must make of life!

EDWARD. They do . . . and then come to me for advice. It's how you told me to earn my living.

DOROTHY. You only tell them what the law says and what two and two make. That's all you

ever tell me. But what I was alive for I have always known. So of course I knew when I died.

EDWARD. Dorothy, my dear, it hurts me to hear you say it.

DOROTHY. Why ? We must all die and be born again . . . how many times in our lives ? I went home that night and sent poor old Sarah to bed. And I didn't curse and break things . . . I'd always let myself do that a little on occasions . . . it seemed so much more human . . . when I was alone . . . oh, only when I was quite alone. But that night it had all been different . . . and I sat still in the dark, . . . and wondered . . . wondered what was to happen now. It's a frightening thing at best to lose your old and well-trained trusted self . . . and not know what the new one's going to be. I was angry. I had rehearsed the wretched play so well, too. Why do people think I've no brains, Edward ?

EDWARD. I suppose because you're so pretty.

DOROTHY. Or perhaps because I don't use them for the things they were never meant to be used for. I've sometimes thought, since I can't act any longer, I might show the dear Public my rehearsing. That'd teach them ! But there . . . I've come down to wanting to teach them. Time to retire. For you see after that night I wasn't born again. Something . . . didn't happen. And a weary business it has been finding out what. With the dear Public helping me to discover . . . hard on them they've thought it. And you so patient with my passion to keep on failing . . .

hard on you. For you've not understood. I've disappointed you these later years. Own up.

EDWARD. If it's admitted that all my heart is your most humble servant, I'll own up again to disapproving of the Theatre . . . to disapproving most thoroughly of acting and of actors too, and to doubly disapproving when any new nonsense about them is added to life's difficulties.

DOROTHY. Yes . . . if the life you call life's so important! Well . . . I have four hundred a year . . . s a f e . . . to retire on, haven't I, Edward?

EDWARD. As safe as money can be.

DOROTHY. I do think that money ought to learn to be safe. It has no other virtues. And I've got my Abbey.

EDWARD. Milford Abbey is safe for you from everything but earthquake.

DOROTHY. How utterly right that I should end my days in a shanty built out of the stones of that great Abbey and buttressed up in its shell!

EDWARD. Is it?

DOROTHY. Oh! Edward, if you had but the artist's sense of the eternal fitness of things, you'd find it such a help. . . .

EDWARD. . . . To imagining Miss Dorothy leading the Milford monks a dance.

DOROTHY. Well . . . their religion was not of this world, nor is mine. But yours is, dear Edward. Therefore the follies of art and saintliness must seem to you two sorts of folly and not one. St. Francis would have understood me. I should have

been his dear sister Happiness. But you and the railway trains running on time would have puzzled him no end.

EDWARD. What foolishness makes you say you're dead, my dear ?

DOROTHY. While . . . if I'd lived the cautious life, I shouldn't be. If I'd sold my fancies for a little learning, virginity for a gold ring, likings for good manners, hate for silence . . . if I ever could have learnt the world's way . . . to measure out gifts for money and thanks . . . well, I'd have been married to you perhaps, Edward. And then you never could have enjoyed my Imogen as you used to enjoy it. You used to say it was a perfect tonic.

EDWARD. So it was !

DOROTHY. Yes, dear, you never had a gift for subtle expression, had you ?

EDWARD. From the beginning I suppose you expected more of life than ever I could find in it.

DOROTHY. Whatever I expected, my friend, I bargained for nothing at all.

EDWARD. I'd like you to know this, Dorothy, that for all my rectangular soul, as you used to call it . . . when I asked you to marry me . . .

DOROTHY. On which of those great occasions ?

EDWARD. On the various occasions I did ask you before I did . . . otherwise . . . marry.

DOROTHY. I think there were five . . . or six. I recall them with pride.

EDWARD. But not with enough of it to ensure accuracy.

DOROTHY. And was it never just for the sake of repeating yourself ?

EDWARD. No. When I was most ridiculously in love I used to think three times before I faced a life with you in that . . .

DOROTHY. Well ?

EDWARD. That flowery wilderness which was your life. I knew there were no safe roads for me there. And yet I asked you . . . knowing that very well.

DOROTHY. I'm glad . . . for your sake . . . that you risked it.

EDWARD. Glad, for your own, y o u didn't ?

DOROTHY. Did you really only marry her because I told you to ?

EDWARD. I fear so.

DOROTHY. That was a wrong reason for doing the right thing. But I could not have one of the ablest men of his set in everything else said at his club to be sentimentalizing his life away about an actress . . . I really couldn't. They told me she was desperately in love with you. And I never would have spoken to you again if you hadn't. Edward, it was never hard on her, was it ?

EDWARD. No, Dorothy, I hope and think it never was. I made her happy in every ordinary sense . . . at least I felt she felt so.

DOROTHY. And you did love her, didn't you, Edward ?

EDWARD. I shouldn't put this into words perhaps. I thought through those twenty-five years I gave her all the love that her love asked for. But the world of . . . folly, one calls it . . . into which your laugh had once lifted me. . . .

DOROTHY. Or was it wisdom?

EDWARD. That, my dear Dorothy, was the problem you would never consent to try and solve.

DOROTHY. She never could have liked me, Edward.

EDWARD. She thought you a great artist. She had judgment and taste, you know.

DOROTHY. Yes . . . she thought me an attack of scarlet fever, let us say . . . and that it was a very beautiful scarlet.

EDWARD. Dorothy . . . somehow that hurts.

DOROTHY. I'm sorry.

EDWARD. She wasn't witty enough, you see, to say such things. But some years before she died, her nature seemed to take a fresh start, as it were. It shot out in the oddest ways . . . over a home for horses and cooking reforms . . . and a most romantic scheme for sending strayed servant girls to Australia to get married. If there had been any genius in my love for her . . . would she have had to wait till forty-five and then find only those crabbed half-futile shoots of inner life begin to show? While her children were amused . . . and I was tolerant! For quite incurably middle-aged she was by then.

DOROTHY. Had she dreaded that?

EDWARD. Not a bit. Not even in fun . . . as we made such a fuss of doing.

DOROTHY. Admirable Ethel. Clear-eyed and so firm-footed on this spinning earth. And Life her duty . . . to be punctually and cheerfully done. But overtrained a little, don't you think . . . just for her own happiness' sake.

EDWARD. She didn't count h e r happiness.

DOROTHY. She should have.

EDWARD. She shouldn't have died when she did.

DOROTHY. The doctors were fools.

EDWARD. Well, it was a while after . . . remembering my love for you . . . I suddenly saw how perhaps, after all, I had wronged her.

DOROTHY. It was just three years after that you asked me to marry you yet again.

EDWARD. You forgave me. Let's forget it. It was good to feel I was still a bit of a fool.

DOROTHY. Folly for certain it was then ?

EDWARD. And not so old at heart as you thought.

DOROTHY. I like your declarations, Edward. They're different. But never from the beginning have you been like the others.

EDWARD. And I was never jealous of any of the three.

DOROTHY. Four.

EDWARD. Four ?

DOROTHY. One that you never knew about. I told you though I should never marry . . . and I never have. Perhaps I'm as frightened at the

meaning I might find in it . . . as you ought to have been.

EDWARD. They made you just as miserable at times, Dorothy, as if you had married them.

DOROTHY. Poor dears.

EDWARD. And two out of the three were really perfect fools.

DOROTHY. Three out of the four, my friend, were perfect fools . . . helpless fools.

EDWARD. Then which wasn't ?

DOROTHY. The one you never guessed about. Don't try to even now. He never really cared for me, you see . . . and I knew he didn't . . . and so I was ashamed to tell you.

EDWARD. Now when was that ?

DOROTHY. You're trying to guess.

EDWARD. No, honestly. . . .

DOROTHY. Do you remember a time when I was very cross with life and wouldn't act for a whole year . . . in the days when I still could. I went down to Grayshott and started a garden . . . a failure of a garden. And you came down to see me . . . and we talked into the dark. And I said I ought to have married father's scrubby-headed assistant and had ten children. . . .

EDWARD. I vaguely remember.

DOROTHY. Well, it wasn't then . . . but shortly after.

EDWARD. You wanted that experience. . . .

DOROTHY. No . . . no ! How dare you ? Am I that sort of a creature . . . collecting sensations ?

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Sometimes, Edward, I find you the biggest fool of the lot . . . a fool at heart, which is worse than a fool at head . . . and wickeder.

EDWARD. I'm sorry!

DOROTHY. Never mind, it's not your fault now if fresh air disagrees with you. And you can't open the window here, for only dust comes in.

EDWARD. Is the room stuffy?

DOROTHY. Yes . . . but so's London . . . and so's life.

EDWARD. I do remember there was a time when I thought you were hardening a little.

DOROTHY. Well, it wasn't from that bruising. No man or woman in this world shall make me hard.

EDWARD. Dorothy, will you marry me?

DOROTHY. (*Her voice pealing out.*) Oh, my dear!

EDWARD. That's what you said to Blackthorpe when he offered you his millions on a bright Sunday morning. Don't say it to me.

DOROTHY. I never called him My dear . . . I was much too proper . . . and so is he! But you are the dear of one corner of my heart . . . it is the same old corner always kept for you. No, no . . . that sort of love doesn't live in it. So for the . . . seventh? . . . let's make it the seventh time . . . oh, yes, I wear them on my memory's breast like medals . . . no, I won't.

EDWARD. Very well. If you don't want to raise five thousand pounds you'd better close the theatre after this next play's produced.

DOROTHY. Heavens above . . . that's what we

started to discuss. What have we been talking of since ?

EDWARD. Dear Dorothy . . . I never do know what we talk of. I only know that by the time I've got it round to business it's time for you to go.

DOROTHY. Yes, I said I'd be back at the theatre by half-past twelve.

EDWARD. It's long after.

DOROTHY. I'm so glad. They'll finish the act without me and lunch. I never want food. Isn't it odd ?

EDWARD. Do you decide to close the theatre after this next play ?

DOROTHY. I decide not to ask man, woman, or devil for another penny.

EDWARD. Then you close.

DOROTHY. But if it's a success ?

EDWARD. Then, when it's finished you may have a few pounds more than four hundred a year.

DOROTHY. I don't want 'em.

EDWARD. But you'll close ?

DOROTHY. I will. This time I really will and never, never open again. I want my Abbey. I want to sit in the sun and spoil my complexion and acquire virtue. Do you know I can have fourteen volumes at a time from the London Library ?

EDWARD. Yes . . . don't spoil your complexion.

DOROTHY. Well . . . when it is really m y complexion and no longer the dear Public's I may get to like it better. To acquire knowledge for its own sake ! Do you never have that hunger on

you? To sit and read long books about Byzantium. Not frothy foolish blank-verse plays . . . but nice thick meaty books. To wonder where the Goths went when they vanished out of Italy. Knowledge and Beauty! It's only when you love them for their own sake that they yield their full virtue to you. And you can't deceive them . . . they always know.

EDWARD. I'm told that the secret of money-making's something like that.

DOROTHY. Oh, a deadlier one. Money's alive and strong. And when money loves y o u . . . look out.

EDWARD. It has never wooed me with real passion. Six and eightpences add up slowly.

Dorothy throws herself back in her chair and her eyes up to the ceiling.

DOROTHY. You've never seen me asking for money and boasting about my art, have you?

EDWARD. That has been spared me.

DOROTHY. I'm sorry you've missed it for ever. It is just as if the millionaire and I. . . .

EDWARD. Though they weren't always millionaires.

DOROTHY. They were at heart. I always felt we were striking some weird bargain. For all I'd see at his desk was a rather apologetic little man . . . though the Giant Money was outlined round him like an aura. And he'd seem to be begging me as humbly as he dared to help save his little soul . . . though all the while the Giant that enveloped

him was business-like and jovial and stern. I shouldn't like to be only the marrow of a shadowy giant, Edward . . . with no heart's blood in me at all.

EDWARD. That's why our modern offices are built so high, perhaps.

DOROTHY. Yes, he reaches to the ceiling.

EDWARD. And are very airless, as you say.

DOROTHY. Ah . . . it's he that breathes up all the air. You have made rather a poor and arid world of it, haven't you, Edward . . . you and Henry and John and Samuel and William and Thomas.

EDWARD. Will Mary Jane do much better?

DOROTHY. Not when you've made a bloodless woman of her. And you used to bite your pipe and talk nonsense to me about acting . . . about its necessarily debilitating effect, my dear Dorothy, upon the moral character. Edward, would I cast for a king or a judge or a duchess actors that couldn't believe more in reigning or judging or duchessing than you wretched amateurs do?

EDWARD. We "put it over," as you vulgar professionals say.

DOROTHY. Do you think so? Because the public can't tell the difference . . . as the voice of my business manager drones. I've fancied sometimes that actors, playing parts . . . but with real faith in that unreal . . . yet live those lives of yours more truly. Why . . . swiftly and keenly I've lived a hundred lives.

EDWARD. No . . . the trouble with my patients. . . .

DOROTHY. Of course they are! That's why I've to be brought here by force. I never feel ill.

EDWARD. Never a pain in the pocket!

DOROTHY. I never f e e l it.

EDWARD. The trouble when most people do is that it's all they can feel or believe in. And I have to patch them up.

DOROTHY. Put a patch on the pocket . . . tonic the poor reputation.

EDWARD. Though, after all, what can I say to them? If they found out that the world as they've made it doesn't exist . . . or perhaps their next world as they've invented it either.

DOROTHY. Oh, but I'm sure that exists . . . just about as much. And that you'll all be there . . . bustling among the clouds . . . making the best of things . . . beating your harps into coin . . . bargaining for eternity . . . and saying that of course what you go so wearily on in hope of is another and a better world.

EDWARD. Shall we meet?

DOROTHY. I think not. I flung my soul over the footlights before ever I was sure that I had one . . . well, I was never uncomfortably sure. As you warned me I should . . . biting your pipe. No, thanks, I don't want another. . . . I have been given happier dreams. Do you remember that letter of your father's that I would read?

EDWARD. No. . . .

DOROTHY. Oh yes! Think twice, my dear boy, think twice before you throw yourself away on this woman.

EDWARD. Old innocent! You were the cautious one.

DOROTHY. But you never knew, Edward, how tempted I was.

EDWARD. Dorothy, don't! The years haven't taught me to take that calmly.

DOROTHY. Every woman is what I was more or less. . . .

EDWARD. Less.

DOROTHY. So they seem. And you won't pay the price of more.

EDWARD. What was it? I was ready . . . and ready to pay.

DOROTHY. The price to you of my freedom when you love me! Why . . . dear Edward . . . your jaw sets even now. And so . . . for your happiness . . . that your minds may be easy as you bustle through the world's work . . . so we must seem to choose the cat-like comfort of the fireside, the shelter of your cheque-book and our well-mannered world. And, perhaps I should have chosen that if I could have had my choice.

EDWARD. Dorothy!

DOROTHY. Had not some ruthless windy power from beyond me . . . blown me free.

EDWARD. Dorothy . . . I've loved you . . . and I do . . . with a love I've never understood. But sometimes I've been glad you didn't marry me

. . . prouder of you as you were. Because my love would seem a very little thing.

DOROTHY. It is.

EDWARD. I never boasted . . . never of that.

DOROTHY. But the more precious . . . a jewel. And if we're to choose and possess things . . . nothing finer. My dear . . . what woman wouldn't love you? You've not been flattered enough. Never mind . . . you lost no dignity on your knees. I had no choice though but to be possessed . . . of seven angels. Oh, my dear friend . . . could you ever have cast them out?

EDWARD. I've watched them wear you through . . . the seven angels of your art that kept you from me.

DOROTHY. Yes . . . I'm a weary woman.

For a moment there is silence.

EDWARD. But sometimes I've wondered . . . what we two together might have done. Oh, Dorothy, why didn't you try?

DOROTHY. Not with these silly self-conscious selves. Poor prisoners . . . born to an evil time. But visions do come . . . of better beings than we are . . . of a theatre not tinselled . . . and an office not dusty with law . . . all rustling with quarrelsome papers. How wrong to tie up good lively quarrels with your inky tape! Oh, shut your eyes . . . it's easier to see then. Are they shut?

EDWARD. Close. And the grip of your hand is wonderful for the eyesight.

DOROTHY. Aren't you an artist, too, Edward

. . . our fault if we forget it. For Law is a living thing. It must be, mustn't it ?

EDWARD. Yes . . . I had forgotten.

DOROTHY. My dreams and the stories of them are worthless unless I've a living world to dream of. What are words and rules and names for men to live by? Armour with nothing inside it. So our dreams are empty, too.

EDWARD. Oh . . . Dorothy, my dear, it may sound as silly as ever when I say it . . . but why, why didn't you marry me ?

DOROTHY. Yes . . . I should have made a difference to this habitation, shouldn't I ?

EDWARD. Would you have cared to come here then ?

DOROTHY. Always . . . the spirit of me. And I do think you were a better match than the looking-glass.

EDWARD. I promise you should always have found yourself beautiful . . . in my eyes.

DOROTHY. But I'm widowed of my looking-glasses. Edward, have you noticed that for fifteen years there's not been one in my house . . . except three folding ones in the bathrooms.

EDWARD. I remember my wife remarking it.

DOROTHY. Some women did . . . and some men were puzzled without knowing why.

EDWARD. She wondered how you studied your parts.

DOROTHY. I could have told her how I learnt not to . . . and it's rather interesting.

EDWARD. Tell me.

DOROTHY. This is, perhaps, the little bit of truth I've found . . . my little scrap of gold. From its brightness shines back all the vision I have . . . and I add it proudly to the world's heap. Though it sounds the silliest thing . . . as silly as your loving me at fifty-seven, more babyishly than you did at seventeen.

EDWARD. Please heaven my clerks don't see me till . . .

DOROTHY. Till you're quite self-conscious again. Well . . . before the child in me died . . . such an actress you all thought as never was. . . .

EDWARD. "O breath of Spring! Our wintry doubts have fled."

DOROTHY. But, remember, all children could be like that.

EDWARD. I deny it.

DOROTHY. And that's why they're not. Well, growing older as we say . . . and self-conscious, Edward . . . I found that the number of my looking-glasses grew. Till one day I counted them . . . and big and small there were forty-nine. That day I'd bought the forty-ninth . . . an old Venetian mirror . . . so popular I was in those days and felt so rich. Yes . . . then I used to work out my parts in front of every mirror in turn. One would make me prettier and one more dignified. One could give me pathos and one gave me power. Now there was a woman used to come and sew for me. You know! I charitably gave her jobs . . . took an

interest in her "case" . . . encouraged her to talk her troubles out for comfort's sake. I wasn't interested . . . I didn't care one bit . . . it didn't comfort her. She talked to me because she thought I liked it . . . because she thought I thought she liked it. But, oddly . . . it was just sewing she liked, and she sewed well and sewing did her good . . . sewing for me. You remember my "Lily Prince" in "The Backwater"?

EDWARD. Yes.

DOROTHY. My first real failure.

EDWARD. I liked it.

DOROTHY. My first dead failure . . . dear Public. Do you know why? I hadn't found her in the mirrors, I'd found her in that woman as she sewed.

EDWARD. I didn't think it a failure.

DOROTHY. Well . . . the dear Public wouldn't pay to see it . . . and we've found no other word. But I knew . . . if that was failure . . . now I meant to fail. And I never looked in a mirror again. Except, of course, to do my hair and paint my poor face and comically comfort myself sometimes. To say . . . "Dorothy, as mugs go it's not such an ugly mug." I took the looking-glasses down . . . I turned their faces to the wall . . . for I had won free from that shadowed emptiness of self. But nobody understood. Do you?

EDWARD. If I can't . . . I'll never say that I love you again.

DOROTHY. What can we understand when we're all so prisoned in mirrors that whatever we see it's

but ourselves . . . ourselves as heroes or slaves . . . suffering, triumphant . . . always ourselves. Truth lives where only other people are. That's the secret. Turn the mirror to the wall and there is no you . . . but the world of other people is a wonderful world.

EDWARD. We've called them your failures, have we . . . when we wouldn't follow you there?

DOROTHY. And I that have, proudly, never bargained was so tempted to bargain for success . . . by giving you what your appetites wanted . . . that mirrored mannequin slightly oversize that bolsters up your self-conceit.

EDWARD. But you had meant our youth to us, Dorothy. . . .

DOROTHY. I'd given you that long since . . . the flower of me . . . had I grudged it?

EDWARD. I think we're frightened of that other world.

DOROTHY. Well you may be!

EDWARD. If we couldn't find ourselves there with our virtues and our vanity . . . the best and the worst of what we know.

DOROTHY. So you all failed me, you see . . . for I'd given you all my life, and what other had I? And I failed . . . died . . . not to be born again. Oh, my poor theatre! Keep it for a while then to patronize and play with. But one day it shall break you all in pieces. And now my last curtsey's made. . . .

The paper-knife she has been playing with snaps.

EDWARD. Dorothy . . . what an omen! Not your last visit here, too!

DOROTHY. A fine omen. I do not surrender my sword! But I shouldn't march off quite so proudly, Edward, if it weren't for a new voice from that somewhere in me where things are born saying . . . shall I tell you what it says?

EDWARD. Please.

DOROTHY. The scene is laid in Dorothy's soul. Characters . . . A voice . . . Dorothy. Dorothy discovered as the curtain rises in temper and tears. The Voice: "Thirty-five years finding out your mistake! But that's a very short time." Dorothy: "Boohoo! . . . but now I'm going to die." The Voice: "Who told you so?" Dorothy: "Oh . . . aren't I? . . . or rather Am I not?" The Voice: "Dorothy, my dear . . . what led you that November day to your ruined Abbey . . . what voice was it called to you so loud to make it yours? Yours! What are you beside the wisdom of its years? You must go sit, Dorothy, sit very patiently in the sunshine under the old wall . . . where marigolds grow . . . and there's one foxglove . . . (hsh, I planted it!). Did it trouble those builders . . . who built it not for themselves . . . nor for you . . . but to the glory of God they built it . . . did it trouble them that they were going to die?" Dorothy: "If they'd known that the likes of me would one day buy it with good hard cash they'd have had heart failure on the spot. Besides, they did die and their blessed Abbey's a ruin." Two

thousand five hundred pounds it cost me to do it up.

EDWARD. Well ?

DOROTHY. Well . . . if I say anything like that of course the voice is silent. But if I sit there after sunset when the world's all still . . . I often sit to watch the swallows, and if you keep quiet they'll swoop quite close . . . then I can hear the voice say : " They built the best they could . . . they built their hearts into the walls . . . they mixed the mortar with their own hearts' blood. They spoke the truth that was in them and then they were glad to die." " But was it true ? " I ask. " And see how the wall is crumbling." And then the voice says : " What is Truth but the best that we can build ? . . . and out of its crumbling other truth is built. Are you tired, Dorothy ? " I answer : Yes, that I am very tired. But I sit there till the stars shine and there are friendly spirits around me. Not the dead . . . never . . . but the unborn . . . waiting their heritage . . . my gift to them . . . mine, too. That's the true length of life . . . the finished picture of his being that the artist signs and sells . . . gives . . . loses ! It was his very soul and it is gone. But then he is glad to go . . . to be dust again . . . nothingness . . . air . . . for then he knows most truly. . . .

EDWARD. What ?

DOROTHY. Why, I told you . . . that he was always nothingness called by some great name . . . that the world of other people is the only world there is. Edward, what's the time ?

EDWARD. Past one.

DOROTHY. Well, I'm hungry. Take me out and give me lunch.

EDWARD. Bless you . . . I will.

With three fine gestures she puts on her hat again. Time was when one would sit through forty minutes of a dull play just to see Dorothy take off her hat and put it on again. Much less expressively he finds his and they go out together. The clerks all stare ecstatically as she passes.

THE END

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